LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

CHAP. BX 8345

SHELF .P6 1847

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

9—167

Deposited March 13, 1847
Recorded Vol. 22, Page 69

No. 78.

THE

TRUE EVANGELIST:

OR,

AN ITINERANT MINISTRY,

PARTICULARLY THAT OF

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

EXPLAINED, GUARDED, AND DEFENDED.

BY REV. JAMES PORTER.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY REV. ABEL STEVENS.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
CITY OF WASHINGTON

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."—*Christ.*

"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following."—*Mark.*

"The world is my parish."—*Wesley.*

BOSTON:
WAITE, PEIRCE AND COMPANY,
No. 1 Cornhill.
1847.

C

BX 8345
.P6
1847

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1847, by JAMES PORTER, in the Clerk's office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

G. C. Rand & Co., Printers, No. 3 Cornhill.

PREFACE.

This little volume is intended to occupy a place which is not filled by any other book. It was suggested by the experience and observation of the writer, in the several relations he has sustained to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and contains the substance of various sermons, and conversations, which he has found it necessary to give in different places. Its object is to exhibit the itinerant system as it *really* is, and to guard, strengthen, and defend it, as a system of divine sanction, eminently calculated to promote the salvation of the world.

In submitting it to the press, the writer yields to the judgment of those, in whose opinions he has been accustomed to place high confidence. And if its publication shall contribute to the confirmation and usefulness of his younger brethren, in carrying forward the grand scheme of evangelizing the world by an itinerant ministry, he will feel himself richly compensated for his labor.

The Author.

Worcester, Mass., 1847.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION, ... 7

CHAPTER I.

An Itinerant Ministry Scriptural, ... 11

CHAPTER II.

An Itinerant Ministry Expedient, ... 18

CHAPTER III.

Objections to an Itinerant Ministry Considered, . . . 42

CHAPTER IV.

Some Things Necessary to Constitute an Itinerant Ministry Efficient, ... 50

CHAPTER V.

The System of Itinerancy in the Methodist Episcopal Church, ... 65

CHAPTER VI.

Some Sources of Danger to the Itinerancy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, ... 88

CHAPTER VII.

The kind of Ministry Necessary to the Itinerancy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, ... 117

CHAPTER VIII.

Local Preachers as they Stand Related to the Itinerancy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, . . . 135

CHAPTER IX.

The Duties of Stewards in Relation to the Itinerancy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, ... 142

INTRODUCTION.

It is generally believed by those who receive the Holy Scriptures as the word of God, that the Christian Ministry is of divine appointment. Who may properly enter it?—what are the necessary qualifications for the office, and how ought it to be sustained and exercised? with numerous collateral questions, are matters of some diversity of opinion. Good and intelligent men have honestly arrived at various conclusions regarding them, and adjusted themselves to their faith in different denominations accordingly. It would be interesting to trace this diversity in its ramifications, but the object of the ensuing pages confines the author principally to the single aspect of the subject indicated by the phrase *Itinerant Ministry.*

A ministry which holds the pastoral charge of the same church for an indefinite term of years, as among Congregationalists, is called a *settled* ministry. One which is not thus fixed, but goes from place to place, with or without system, is distinguished by the term *Itinerant.*

A settled ministry subject to be *called*, contracted with, and inducted into the office of pastor by the people, and retained *ad libitum*, is the popular idea of the

Christian pastorate, at the present day, especially in New England, where it has existed more than two centuries. Whether this is attributable to the fact, that it is more business like, placing preachers and people in the market, as it really does, or that it gives free scope to selfishness in both, in disposing of themselves, or to some other cause, is open to conjecture. The fact is unquestionable, and the Itinerant feels its effects wherever he goes. Many have determined that our Itinerancy with its necessary Episcopal basis is wrong, and deny us even the common interdenominational courtesies. Indeed, no pains have been spared to intercept our progress and destroy our influence. Others rejoice in our doctrine and ministrations, but do not sustain us otherwise than by complimentary speeches, because we do not *settle*, and become exclusively their own. There are many of this character. They see no reason why we do not locate like other ministers, or why they should support a system that does not consult their particular tastes, and cannot be under their local control. They seem to forget that *benevolence*, not *selfishness*, is the appropriate principle of action in this highest function on earth, and that we are bound to sustain that policy, which, being in harmony with divine revelation, is the most efficient in securing the objects of the ministry. Hence, while they bestow loud encomiums upon the efficiency of our itinerancy, as an incomparable instrumentality in converting men to God, they still adhere to and support a system of far less efficiency, themselves being judges.

Some of our own church members who have been

educated under Congregational influences, are not entirely weaned from these popular notions. There are others who are captivated by the success of our cause, and vigorously support it, who are yet unable to explain and defend its system of operations. They, therefore, admit objections to parts of it, which they ought to meet and resist, while as a whole they advocate and sustain it for its acknowledged utility. The church has suffered exceedingly from this source, and must continue to suffer till our members are impressed with the divine philosophy of the system in its *parts* no less than as a whole, and are able to defend it against every assault. To promote such an appreciation of our ministerial economy is the principle object of the following pages.

Another purpose contemplated by my friend in the preparation of this work, is the promotion of a cheerful, more elastic and energetic operation of our whole system. To feel that we are pursuing the *right* course, and moving in the order of *Heaven*, is divinely exhilarating. It gives fresh energy to every faculty, and nerves us to endurance and labor. An itinerant minister, depriving himself of many of the conveniences of domestic life, of ease, honor and emolument, and grappling with popular prejudice and incessant labors, is liable to depressing discouragements. Nothing short of the fullest conviction that he is doing his duty, and cannot deviate without recreance to conscience and to God, can sustain him. The burden-bearing portion of the church are similarly exposed, though not in so great a degree, and need to be inspired by the same high considerations. It is profitable for us, therefore, occasionally to review

the grounds of our economy, and re-write its hallowing sentiments upon our hearts.

It will bear examination. Its results in both hemispheres are looked upon by many wise and good men as providential anomalies of the age. A just comprehension of its principles and consequences would produce, among our people, it is believed, a sentiment of heroic self-sacrifice and devotion in its support. I am happy, therefore, in giving my humble commendation of a work which so fully and ably expounds it as does the present volume. It is, as it should be, a popular discussion of the subject, in style and spirit, but proceeds on a solid theoretical substructure. The details of the discussion are there amply traced, more so than in any other work extant. I doubt not that its circulation will tend very effectually to correct the prevalent prejudice against our ecclesiastical system, and invigorate the interest of our people for it.

A. STEVENS.

Boston, 1847.

THE TRUE EVANGELIST.

CHAPTER I.

AN ITINERANT MINISTRY SCRIPTURAL.

The first question to be considered in the discussion of any measure proposed for the advancement of religion, is, do the Scriptures authorize it? Inclination, convenience, philosophy and apparent utility, furnish but a poor apology for it, while it has not the sanction of this divine standard of faith and practice, either by direct precept or logical induction. Nor is the absence of all these a valid objection to it, while it is sustained by this high authority.

The Christian ministry is a divine institution. Its origin and early operations, are matters of inspired record. By referring to the New Testament history we learn, that its imperial Founder was himself an itinerant. Instead of confining his ministry to his native town, or to the capital of the country, he "*went about* doing good." When

persecution or unbelief interrupted his course, so that he "could not do many weighty works" in one place, he withdrew himself and resorted to another. And when his popularity had reached such a height that the people were about to proclaim him "a king," he departed into a mountain, and from thence to Capernaum, and elsewhere, as the interests of the people required.

Matthew, speaking of his itinerancy, says, "he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom," —that "he went about all the cities and villages." His own representation is to the same effect. When a certain Scribe "said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," he replied, "the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Both the question and the answer show, that he circulated among the people in the largest sense. As the infidelity of the community did not deter him from giving them an offer of life, so neither did their faith or flattery restrain him from leaving them and preaching to others. The obscure village was not so unimportant as to escape his notice, nor the magnificent city so attractive, as to monopolize his efforts.

Whether he designed that his coadjutors and successors should imitate him in this respect, is

to be considered. When he called Peter, and Andrew his brother, to the ministry, he said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." And they left their nets and followed him. He called James and John immediately after, and "they left the ship and their father and followed him." So also it was with Matthew, whom he found sitting at the receipt of custom. They were all taken at once into the itinerancy, to share their Master's toils, to listen to his instructions, and to participate in his sufferings, that they might be prepared for their destined work. If they were not yet actual ministers, they were candidates, and were, therefore, put upon a course of training best adapted to fit them for their calling. It is doubtful whether any man can well sustain the duties and trials of such a work, till he has been educated under the tuition of some practical professor. He may have much valuable information, but how to apply it in the best manner is to be learned by experience and observation. A minister not only needs theory but practice, and that under the eye of an accomplished master. Hence the utility of the circuit system, which brings youth and age in contact, and enables licentiates to see something of the operation of the ministry, before they are called to incur all its responsibilities.

Having selected the twelve apostles, Jesus sent them forth, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence." He afterward "appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into *every city* and *place* whither he himself would come." The great commission given to the eleven after his resurrection—the commission under which all ministers claim to act, places this matter in the clearest light. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," is its expressive language. "*Go,*" not settle down—"go into *all the world.*" How explicit! "And preach the gospel to *every creature.*" They had been restricted before, now all restriction is removed, and they are to preach not to Jews only, but to the Gentiles—to the Greeks and Barbarians.

It was in view of this, that the immortal Wesley declared, "The world is my parish." And according to this divine charter, it is the parish of every man whom Christ calls to the holy office. How can it be understood in any other sense? When one was inclined to tarry among his friends and

attend to the burial of his father, Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." That the eleven understood it as an itinerant commission, is certain, for it is added, "so then, after the Lord had spoken to them, he was received up into heaven, and they went forth and preached *every where*, the Lord working with them and confirming the word." The itinerancy of St. Paul is a matter of imperishable record. The map of his long and tedious journeys by sea and land, is found in almost every Sabbath school of whatever denomination, and is a silent rebuke to the localism of the age.

Timothy and Titus were travelling bishops, going like angels of mercy to every part of the known world, superintending the whole work, and pushing the victory in every direction. Indeed, itinerancy was a stamped feature of the apostleship. All were called of God—all itinerated, and the world was filled with their doctrine.

It is not pretended that there were no local agencies at work, for there were many. Says St. Paul, "God set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that, miracles, then gifts of healing; helps, governments, diversities of tongues." No doubt, that many of these were more limited in their sphere of opera-

tion. What we contend for is, that the ministers who were regularly called—of whom God, in his wisdom, has seen fit to furnish a particular amount, were itinerants.

Nor is it denied that the itinerancy began to decline at an early period, and that a settled ministry, possessing the elements of an ecclesiastical hierarchy, succeeded it. And it is equally certain that piety declined also, and that the church was rent by heresies, the most corrupting and dangerous. What connection these two facts have with each other we will not now say. That various philosophers and Judaizing teachers crept into the churches formed by the apostles, and turned away some from the simplicity of the gospel to their boasted systems, is clearly indicated in the epistles. Says "the chief of the apostles" to the Galations, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ. Who hath bewitched you? I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." These troublers of Israel were not open enemies. Had they been, they would have been less dangerous. They were the pretended friends of religion, and suggested their novelties as learned corrections and improvements. Their object was to adjust Christianity to the pride of man; and whether they did this with a view to procuring a

settlement, or not, as they succeeded in alienating many of the disciples from their spiritual teachers, they no doubt received calls, and were instituted regular pastors in due form, that is, in a form agreeable to the popular taste.

The itinerancy in those early times was peculiarly laborious. It was attended with imminent danger, which required Herculean courage to meet it. It was almost entirely unrequited, as its worthiest incumbents had to labor with their own hands to get bread; whereas human nature inclines to ease, to emolument, to public applause, to home and friends. And what were men then, more than now, that they would withstand these opposing influences to the carrying out of the grand charter of ministerial duties?

Thus it is evident, that an itinerant ministry has the sanction of Christ and his apostles, and that the commission under which we act, as clearly requires us to itinerate, as to preach. If others can find authority for settling over a congregation for a long series of years, or for life, and expending their energies in a single village or neighborhood, we do not complain. What we have aimed to prove is, that those who itinerate to preach the gospel, act in accordance with the example of the Master and his apostles, and only follow the directions of the "great commission."

CHAPTER II.

AN ITINERANT MINISTRY EXPEDIENT.

Some who admit that it is *lawful* for ministers to itinerate, deny its *expediency*, and we are not unfrequently entertained with a chapter of objections, which in the absence of its advantages, appear formidable. A few thoughts upon this point may not be out of place here. Though the question admits of a wide range, we shall confine our remarks to the narrowest limits possible.

1. We argue the affirmitive of the question from the fact, that *there are different gifts or grades of talent in the ministry.* Men probably differ more in their mental and moral constitutions, than in their physical; and this difference is not much lessened by education. Christ, in his sovereignty, selects his ministers from all classes and conditions—from the field, the fishing boat, the receipt of custom, and also from the walks of aristocracy. So that we find among them all degrees of refinement, of intellect and sensibility—orators, logicians, poets and historians, sons of consolation,

and sons of thunder. Now is it probable, that the Savior designs that his ministers, thus diversified, should confine their labors to a single congregation? This diversity, it seems rational to conclude, is designed for some definite object. And what can it be, if it is not to meet the necessities of the cause? But is all the heresy in one place, that Paul should spend his life there in grappling and overthrowing it? We know better. Heresy is wide-spread, and if God has called a logical, clear-sighted Paul, who is able to analyze error in its multiform aspects, is it not fairly inferable, that it was designed for him to itinerate? How else can he meet the emergency? "The *defence* of the gospel," some ministers have little taste or capacity for, and yet it is ministerial work, which is more or less necessary in every place.

Who can believe that the Master designed Boanerges should lavish all his thunder upon one little community? Are there not others who need it as much? And is there but one city where the mourner needs comforting, that the son of consolation should shut himself up within its walls, and expend all his sympathy upon its afflicted? And is all the taste and refinement in one neighborhood, that elegant Apollos should settle, and shed all his splendors there? We believe there is necessity for these several talents in every

community, and that to circumscribe their application, as is done by the local policy, is entirely opposed to the divine economy. Besides, it puts it in the power of selfish men, who have pecuniary means, to bottle up the thunder, and lightning, and logic, and tears of the pulpit, and appropriate them to their own exclusive use.

2. Another argument in favor of an itinerant ministry is, *there are different tastes among the people.* Dislike it as we may, it is impossible for one minister to please every body. Every minister is too profound, or too superficial—too refined or too coarse, to gratify a portion of his hearers, as would be most profitable for them, and yet each is a perfect model in the view of some of them. One man as naturally admires the reasoning of Paul, as another does the eloquence of Apollos. Another, who takes little interest in either, is overwhelmed by the energy of Peter, while his neighbor, indifferent to them all, is charmed and melted by the sympathy of Barnabas, the son of consolation. Accordingly, there is a corresponding difference in our capability of usefulness to individuals. A minister is not so likely to be useful to those who are not pleased with his style and manner. We have to attract the people to hear us before we can benefit them by our preaching; and then, if they are interested in the manner, they may heed what is said.

As the necessary result of these phenomena, there are a portion of the people who sit under a settled ministry, that seldom have their peculiar tastes gratified. Their preacher may be a very good man, but his style and temperament do not happen to meet their peculiar preferences. And hence, unless they are governed more by principle than by passion, (a rare occurrence among unbelievers,) they will be apt to forsake his ministry, or at least, to pay little attention to it.

This point is illustrated by a single fact in the history of itinerancy, viz., that its revivals are comparatively frequent. By a frequent change of ministers, all the talents of the vocation are brought to bear upon the several tastes and susceptibilities of the people. All, in their turn, are pleased and profited. Paul wins some by learned argument; Apollos wins others by the power of his eloquence, while other classes are affected and saved by their successors, who, though less attractive in some respects, are nevertheless able ministers of the New Testament. Thus, by the blessing of God upon the labors of his itinerant servants, the work advances with something like uniformity, and is not limited to revivals of from *five* to *fifteen* years' intermission—the preachers all become revivalists, and all ranks in community, from the most hopeful subject to the reckless reprobate, are

modified, if not converted, by the preaching of the gospel.

3. A proper system of itinerancy limits the ministry as to time, and thus *keeps them more closely to the subject matter of their mission.* To preach to the same congregation for a succession of years, one must necessarily take a wide range, to avoid sameness, and keep the attention of his people. Various subjects will need to be discussed, and each amplified with great particularity. It will not do to consider theology alone—philosophy, natural and intellectual, astronomy, mathematics, politics and history, cannot be overlooked.

Now that these are subjects of great interest, is admitted. But that they have any direct tendency to awaken and convert sinners to God will not be pretended. Though they may attract more attention than the doctrines of the cross, they are not calculated to subdue the heart. The truths upon which Heaven has conferred the distinguished honor of accomplishing this wonderful work, are few and simple. The being and perfections of God, the depravity of man, the atonement made by Christ, with its causes, designs, and consequences, necessary and contingent—repentance, holiness, the resurrection of the body, judgment, heaven and hell, embrace the substance of them. Thus John preached repentance and faith in the

Savior at hand. Jesus opened his ministry by proclaiming repentance, as an imperative duty. The "twelve" preached the kingdom of heaven near, eleven of whom, were commissioned just before the ascension, to go into all the world and reiterate the story of the cross. Peter and Paul preached these soul-stirring truths with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and with power. And wheresoever salvation has come through preaching, whether by itinerants or settled pastors, it has come through the preaching of these truths, and not by the thousand novelties and abstractions of this or any other age.

Few men have such rare talents, as to be able to confine themselves to these topics, and closely apply them to the heart and conscience, year after year, without incurring the charge of tautology, and preaching their hearers to sleep. But by a change of gifts, these difficulties are avoided, and the interest is kept up. Old truth being presented in a new dress, is more attractive and energetic than ever. Those who rejected it in prose, embrace it in poetry, while others, who turned from it as infinitely dull and dry in close jointed syllogisms, are alarmed when it breaks upon them in an avalanche of impassioned eloquence. How else can we account for the remarkable success of certain ministers called evangelists? Are

these the brightest lights—the profoundest men the world ever saw, or that now live? We do them no injustice in saying, that for intellectual and literary strength, there are hundreds in the land who exceed them. And yet, judging from the best data the subject admits, these men, after making a fair deduction from their labors for spurious converts, accomplish more for the salvation of men in one month, than some of their settled superiors do in a whole life. The fact is, they ply their new hearers with these burning truths, till they make an impression. They have nothing to fear from the charge of sameness, for their stay is short. The object is to win souls to Christ *now*, and not merely to keep on good terms with the people; and therefore they preach directly to the point, and succeed. And if their local brethren would show less opposition, and pay more respect to the obvious meaning of the commission under which they act, we believe it would be better for all concerned.

4. It has the advantage of *a natural love of novelty*, which pervades the whole race. Whether right or wrong, we do love new things. This passion is no doubt stronger in some than in others, but it is co-existent with humanity. We see it every where and in every thing with which our predilections are concerned. Even the firmest

advocates of a settled ministry are infected. They want new houses, new furniture, new equipage, new lawyers, doctors and teachers, and, indeed, many of them want *New Divinity*, and will have it.

Now, since this is the case, and since it is optional with people to attend upon the preaching of the gospel or not, it is desirable to present all the attractions possible, to draw them. A new preacher is not one of the least. Many who would lounge away the Sabbath rather than hear an old sermon repeated, or a new one in a familiar tone and style, might take an interest in hearing a stranger. It is on this principle that strangers are sought as speakers in political campaigns, and in moral reforms,—and also, that the parish congregation is larger when it is known a stranger will officiate. The people wish to hear a new gift.

Itinerancy takes the advantage of this feeling, and charms those to the house of God, who otherwise would not come. And many thus attracted by curiosity, are awakened, and retire to pray, and not a few instances are recorded of their returning home praising God. The church-going bell summoned them to the house of prayer, in vain. All interest in their worthy pastor's pulpit performances was gone. But when it was an-

nounced a stranger was coming, they were attracted, converted, and saved.

5. It is *highly conducive to piety*, both in the ministry and membership. The truths which awaken the sinner and induce him to submit his heart to Christ, are directly calculated to nourish and strengthen devotion in the believer. The minister who faithfully explains and enforces them, must feel more or less of their divine influence upon his own heart. To be constantly holding up Christ from place to place, or preaching faith in his name, and the glorious results which follow, must inspire him with a holy fervor, especially if he succeeds in bringing sinners to repentance.

Besides, there is great difference in the spiritual condition of churches. Some are engaged and full of enterprise, and they wish their minister to be as much, or more so. They, therefore, pray for him. The influence of such a society upon its minister, is remarkable. It gives him more efficiency, and makes him a better man.

Thus, itinerancy, bringing its various subjects within the hallowing influence of the most devoted churches, becomes a source of spiritual interest to them, and prepares them to communicate the heavenly inspiration to others. Its tendency in this respect, is virtually admitted by its enemies. It is a known fact, that when they desire a revival

of religion, they procure the labors of other men —of strangers—men, if possible, fresh from a revival. The old familiar gift, now that something is to be done, is superseded by a new one, and this is considered indispensable to success.

6. An itinerant ministry *is less liable to difficulties with the people.* Where a man is settled for an indefinite term, it is difficult for the people to remove him without contention. They may think his usefulness is at an end, but he does not. As the matter is to be decided by a vote, *they* go about to make proselytes to their views, and *he*, to fortify himself as firmly as possible. *They* talk of his faults, and *he*, of their abuses. Prejudice is created on the one side, and sympathy on the other, till the parties become fully formed. Then comes the crisis—the ballots are cast, and he triumphs. But the minority is not satisfied, and the contest is not ended. Another campaign may come to a different issue. So, on they rush, to prepare for a new trial. A settled minister, (and an estimable man he is,) informed the writer a few years since, that there were six lawsuits then pending in his society, some of which he commenced himself. He fought the battle through, and remained in town the pastor of the minority.

Similar scenes have been witnessed in other places, where ministers have remained years, amid

a storm of opposition, which has neutralized their influence, and finally left, to escape the violence of their enemies. The truth is, the judicial records of New England are *black* with the quarrels of settled pastors and their people. And the drama is not yet closed. Many societies are now in trouble, and will not probably find peace without resort to the law.

These difficulties are generally less, where a minister is hired from year to year; but even in this case there is no security. The question is to be agitated annually. If there is general satisfaction, all will go well; but if not, there will be electioneering on both sides, and enough probably of party feeling, to destroy the spirits and influence of the preacher; so that for him to remain another year, will be of little advantage, either to himself, or his people.

An itinerant ministry, subject to proper regulations, escapes these evils. Where a minister is stationed for a year or two, at most, and is to be removed at the close of this term, any thing like a long and bitter contention, is impracticable. And the *least* is impolitic; for though the parties may be dissatisfied with each other, the best, and most natural remedy of the evil is, to wait patiently till the expiration of the term, when a separation *must* take place. It is a pleasing reflection, and

a truth, the language of which cannot be mistaken, that amid all the litigation that has been witnessed in the courts of New England, between preachers and their people, the Methodist Episcopal Church has been only a spectator. Her first suit has not yet been filed; and such is the nature of her arrangements, it is not probable that she will soon need the intervention of law, to adjust any differences that may occur. Her ministers rather depend on the magnanimity and affection of their people to support them, than on *law;* and leave for other scenes, when their usefulness is at an end, rather than remain in contention. And this we believe to be more in accordance with the instruction of the Savior, who said to his apostles, "when they persecute you in this city, flee ye to another," and it certainly is more becoming a minister of the gospel of *peace.*

7. It is indispensable to the *general spread of Christianity.* However successful stationary ministers may be in our cities, and more densely settled portions of the country, they are not adapted to meet the exigencies of a sparce population. To wait for a *call* from new and unenlightened parts of the country, would be to consign the people to everlasting darkness. The ministry that will regenerate such members of the human family, must go among them *uncalled,* and travel from town to

town, preaching and teaching as Providence may direct. If there were no other argument in favor of an itinerant ministry, this would be sufficient, not only to prove its expediency, but its absolute necessity to the objects of preaching in the larger part of the world.

8. The *history* of *itinerancy* furnishes one of the strongest proofs of its expediency. Rev. B. B. Edwards, a Congregationalist, speaking of the early history of the Church, says, "The *travels* and ministry of the apostles and other missionaries soon spread Christianity through the Roman Empire. Palestine, Syria, Natolia, Greece, the islands of the Mediterranean, Italy, and the northern coast of Africa, as early as the first century, contained numerous societies of Christians. At the end of the second century, Christians were to be found in all the provinces; and at the end of the third century, almost half of the inhabitants of the Roman empire and several neighboring countries, professed the faith of Christ."

Another eminent writer, speaking on the same subject, says, "Destitute of all human advantages, protected by no authority, assisted by no art, not recommended by the reputation of its Author, not enforced by eloquence in its advocates, the word of God grew mighty and prevailed."

Coming down to modern times, we find an itin-

erant ministry not much less efficient than at first. When Rev. John Wesley commenced his extraordinary career, about one hundred years ago, the ministry of all denominations was generally settled, both in Europe and America. The adoption of a circulating ministry, therefore, was among the most novel of his arrangements. Taken in connection with extemporary preaching, it was a distinctive feature of the Methodist system, and has remained so to the present time. The modern history of itenerancy is, therefore, identical with that of Wesleyan Methodism, under its various modifications. Let us now, therefore, glance at Methodism, and see what has been its success.

Beginning with the British Wesleyan Connection, we find that it embraces 1685 travelling preachers, and 468,313 church members. In Great Britain and Ireland, there are 501 circuits, 1313 travelling preachers, and 14,500 local preachers. The average number of members to each circuit is 735, (not including probationers,) and to each preacher, 294, thus constituting one half of all the dissenting force in those countries. The operations of the itinerancy in the Connection may be inferred from the following statements, taken from an English paper: "The number of sermons delivered weekly by the travelling preachers is 3951, or 205,452 in a year; the number by the

local preachers is 11,641 weekly, or 605,302 in a year. The number of miles travelled by the travelling preachers in their regular work is 319,092; number of miles annually travelled by local preachers 2,917,418; total, 3,261,140 miles, a distance equal to one hundred and thirty times the circumference of the globe."

The magnitude and established character of this body is strongly indicated in their numerous periodicals, literary and theological institutions, but especially in their missionary movements. It has been well said of them, that the sun goes not down upon their work. They have 288 mission stations, in different parts of the world, 709 chapels, and 1156 other preaching places, supplied by 382 missionaries, and 1206 local preachers. There are in these stations 102,759 church members in full connection, and 4956 on trial. There are also 481 Sabbath schools, 42,194 scholars; 601 day schools, and 34,130 scholars. To support these, and extend the work, they collected the last year $546,063.

The Methodist Episcopal Church has been organized about *sixty* years. Its present number of travelling preachers is 3262, of local preachers 4874, and of members 651,191, a membership about equal to that of the largest church in this country, and collected in about one third of the

time; and about *three times* as large as the Calvinistic Congregationalist Church, which has been in operation with every earthly facility for growth, for more than *two hundred* years. It sustains missions in Africa, Oregon, and South America, where it has 915 church members; and also in this country among the destitute white population, the Indians and Germans, in all of which, there are 12,911 church members, and 139 missionaries. The amount raised for missionary purposes the last year was $89,528. To this we may add, that they sustain seven colleges, and a large number of other literary establishments of a high order, and are hastening to fill a place in the department of letters worthy of their origin.

The Methodist Episcopal Church South, which separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1845, embraces 1385 travelling preachers, 3607 local preachers, and 461,533 church members, all in the slave States. It employs 267 missionaries, and collected last year $68,529 for missionary purposes. It has six colleges, and numerous other institutions of learning under its management, and otherwise contributes to educational interests within the territory it occupies.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada embraces 147 travelling preachers, 81 circuits and stations, and 21,940 church members.

Besides these, there are the Primitive Methodists, New Connection, Independents, &c., of England, numbering in all not less than 100,000 church members; and the Protestants, and other sects of Methodists in this country, embracing nearly the same number. All these denominations hold to one common faith, and cleave to the itinerancy with a degree of tenacity, indicating their descent from our illustrious founder under God. And when we consider this vast family of itinerants, in reference to their *youth*, the circumstances under which they arose, the *opposition* they have had to meet and overcome, that they are spread out over the wide world, that they have established colleges, seminaries, periodicals, book concerns, and other arrangements suitable to their necessities, how can we avoid the conclusion that itinerancy has had much to do with their success. It cannot be attributed to their doctrines merely, for others have preached the same. Nor to their literary attainments, for in this respect they are frank to acknowledge themselves behind some other denominations. Though many of their preachers are literary men, and have astonished the world by their productions, the mass lay no claim to this character. They have, however, been grossly misrepresented by certain clerical pretenders, who have not distinguished themselves for

modesty and good breeding, however profound their learning. But some of these have had their reward in the mortification of seeing their enlightened hearers forsake them, to attend upon the more tangible and effective ministrations of their itinerating neighbors. They may yet learn, that ministerial education does not consist in mere sheepskin diplomas, and that it is not policy to ridicule whom God and his people "delight to honor."

Had Methodists been *rich* in this world's goods, their success might have been attributed to this cause; but like the Savior and his early disciples, they have generally been poor. They could not appeal to the pride and vanity of the world, by erecting splendid churches, and otherwise making a great display, if they were disposed. They have had to preach in private dwellings, school houses, barns, and in the open air, till they could erect churches. And many of these, for the want of means, have had to be small and often out of place, and uninviting. And the world has looked on and mocked, and professors of religion have not unfrequently joined in the sport. This same cause has been an occasion of reproach to preachers, who have often had to live in a style directly calculated to lessen the respect of community for them, and also for their enterprise. But God has

prospered their work, nevertheless, and their word has been with power. Yes, in spite of all these disadvantages—in the face of popular scorn—of open and violent persecution—of oppressive legislation, and of a regularly settled ministry, they have been able to outstrip all other sects, and to stand first in numbers, and in efficiency in converting sinners to God, which is the principal object of ministerial labor, and the proper test of ministerial qualifications.

The following tribute to the Methodist Episcopal Church, before the separation of the Southern Conferences, from the pen of Dr. Baird, a Presbyterian, not only shows what itinerancy has done in this country, but how, and under what circumstances it has done it:

"Since its organization in 1784, though not without its share of difficulties, its career, upon the whole, has been remarkably prosperous, and God has enabled it to overcome every hindrance with wonderful success. We have seen the numerical amount of its numbers sixty years ago to be 15,000; in 1843 it was 1,068,525 communicants. And the probable proportion of the community under the influence of this church's ministry, is 5,000,000. Surely we may well exclaim, 'What hath God wrought!' It covers the whole land with its net-work system of stations and cir-

cuits, and carries the gospel into thousands of the most remote as well as the most secluded and thinly peopled neighborhoods. This denomination has made great exertions to increase the number of its church edifices within the last few years. But its itinerating ministers preach in thousands of places where no such buildings are yet erected, or at least none belonging to that denomination. In these cases they hold their meetings in school-houses, court-houses, and private houses. No American Christian who takes a comprehensive view of the progress of religion in this country, and considers how wonderfully the means and instrumentalities employed are adapted to the extent and the wants of that country, can hesitate for a moment to bless God, for having, in his mercy, provided them all. Nor will he fail to recognize in the Methodist economy, as well as in the zeal, the devoted piety, and the efficiency of its ministry, one of the most powerful elements in the religious prosperity of the United States, *as well as one of the firmest pillars of their civil and political institutions.*"

But this is only a partial view of the success of Methodist itinerancy. We must look to the records of other churches if we will have any adequate conception of what it has done. There are thousands and tens of thousands among them who

were awakened and converted through the instrumentality of Methodists. Many things have contributed to draw them away from their spiritual relations, and they have settled down in church fellowship with those who never "travailed in birth" for them.

But these churches have been more especially benefited by itinerancy in another way. It has "provoked" them to love and good works. Their ministers are better preachers, better pastors, and better Christians—they have more zeal and enterprise—preach less error and more truth, and otherwise labor more appropriately than when Methodism was first introduced among them. And their people have improved proportionably. Where the family altar was entirely neglected, it now smokes with acceptable incense. Where there were but two meetings in a week, and those on Sunday, in the parish church, there are now several, in various places, to accommodate the people. Where there was pride and worldly amusement, with little piety and enterprise, there is now Christian activity and devotion to God. Such has been the effect of itinerancy upon them, that churches which feared and trembled at the approach of the itinerant, have become firmer, more united and spiritual than they ever were before, and have reason to bless God for the Providence

which brought so useful an agency among them.

Had we not succeeded in forming a single church, or in doing any other good, the influence we have exerted on surrounding denominations, is an abundant compensation for all our sacrifices. This is a high source of encouragement to feeble churches. Though they gain very slowly, if at all, they are doing a great work, and should hold fast and struggle on in good cheer. But O, what a multitude, gathered from all ranks and countries, by the sacrifices and sufferings of different men, have gone home to heaven! Many of them were as sheep having no shepherd, and many had only a hireling shepherd. They were formalists, or infidels, or common sinners till they heard the voice of the stranger calling them to repentance and to God, "warning them day and night with tears." Then they were arrested, found peace in believing, and have since yielded their spirits to God who gave them, with exceeding joy.

From these considerations, to say nothing of others which might be mentioned, an itinerant ministry is evidently expedient. He who established it at first, and sent out his apostles "into all the world to preach the gospel," acted, no doubt, in the light of infinite intelligence. He adopted the best means for the world's conversion. And who that looks at this question impartially,

will not discover substantial reasons for his action? If the world's conversion to God in the shortest time possible, was the supreme object of all ministers of the gospel, would any settle down and confine their exertions to one place? Impossible! When settled ministers wish to accomplish much for temperance, missions, moral reform, &c., they fly from town to town, and from city to city, proclaiming the most pungent truths they have at command touching their subject. Ask them why they do not settle and advocate their favorite cause, and they will think you are joking. Yet such a policy is supported by nearly the same arguments which are urged in favor of a settled ministry.

A short extract from a distinguished writer in the "*Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*," shall conclude this chapter. It is all the more valuable, as it comes from one of the settled order, and it goes far to substantiate the positions taken in the foregoing pages. He says:

"Notwithstanding the prejudices of mankind, and the indiscretions of some individuals, an *itinerant teacher* is one of the most honorable and useful characters to be found upon earth; and there needs no other proof than the experience of the church in all ages, that, where this work is done properly and with perseverance, it forms the grand method of spreading wide, and rendering

efficacious, religious knowledge; for great reformations and revivals of religion have uniformly been thus effected; and it has been especially sanctioned by the *example* of *Christ* and his apostles, and recommended as *the divine method* of spreading the gospel through the nations of the earth."

CHAPTER III.

OBJECTIONS TO AN ITINERANT MINISTRY CONSIDERED.

It is objected to an itinerant ministry,—

1. That it is unpleasant for a people *to part with a minister they esteem.* This is admitted. We dislike to part with friends, and especially with those who have been rendered a blessing to our souls. Many happy converts have had sad experience in this matter, and it has alienated them, we fear, from the itinerant ministry for ever.

But let us examine the objection, and see whether it is valid. "It is *unpleasant.*" So it is unpleasant to lose a right hand, or a right eye. Yet this is sometimes necessary to our health, and even life. Many things we least enjoy are indispensable to our existence. The fact that itinerancy is sometimes disagreeable to the people, therefore, is by no means a sure proof that it is not right and expedient. If your minister be a great and good man, and his ministrations have been sanctified to your conversion and advance-

ment in the knowledge of God, is it not selfishness in you to restrain him from carrying the same blessings to others? The reason why you love him, and refuse to part with him, is the very reason why he should go. God has given him a talent to do good. He has expended it upon you, and has been successful. He is not *your* minister—he belongs to the *world*. He is an ambassador from the court of heaven to a rebellious race. His mission is to "*all*." Will you interrupt his course, or, in the spirit of gospel benevolence, will you give him your prayers, and bid him God speed in saving others?

People sometimes love their minister and desire his continuance with them, not on account of any good he has done, but for reasons of a different nature. Perhaps he is eloquent and companionable, and prophesies smooth things. A minister of this description generally has many friends, though they are not apt to be the most pious. He treats his hearers tenderly, and they reciprocate the favor, and extol him as a worthy man; though not one is converted, and religion is nearly obsolete. To lose such a minister, will, no doubt, be very unpleasant to his people indeed, but is it not best he should leave? What will he do if he remains? He is perfectly entangled in the net they have spread for him, and cannot escape. He

may sometimes wish to be useful, but has not moral courage to come out, and take the course necessary to become so. He needs to go among a people of more devotion to God, and a flaming herald of truth is best fitted for usefulness in the place he leaves. Such a change would be mutually beneficial, and ought to be made, though it might be like the plucking out of a right eye.

2. It is objected, that it is *laborious for ministers.* This will not be denied, and especially where the country is new, the roads rough and difficult, and the support insufficient to meet the actual necessities of life. How much our honored fathers suffered in this trying work, we never shall know until we see them in their distinguished glory. Ease, and worldly gratification, they knew not, nor did they seek either. And it is safe to say that the itinerant who does, will not long continue in the field.

But laborious as is the work, and unpleasant as it is to break up our associations so frequently, and form new acquaintances, the itinerancy of the Master was much more so. He had not "*where to lay his head.*" So was that of the apostles. "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weari-

ness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness," they pursued their divine mission, and died martyrs to their work. And is it becoming their successors to talk of ease, and convenience? Those who have entered the ministry at their own suggestion, uncalled of God, may do so; but shame on our hearts, if we can put such considerations in opposition to any plan of gathering the lost sheep into the fold of Christ. Though by this policy we are torn from the graves of our fathers, and are compelled to bury our wives and little ones among strangers, in different and distant parts, it ill becomes us to complain of hardship, while we claim Christ for our leader, or his apostles for our brethren.

3. It is objected, that an itinerant ministry *cannot know the circumstances of the people*, like one settled, and, therefore, cannot *adapt his instructions to their necessities*. In reply to this, it is important to remind the objector, that a system must be judged of by its operations and results, and not by any single feature, in which it may seem to suffer by comparison. If a minister is successful, it is in vain that we talk of the disadvantages of his system. Itinerancy has succeeded beyond all precedent. It does so this day. It, therefore, is the system for all practical men, though its theory were a perfect paradox.

But to take another view of the subject. We allow that the opportunity of an itinerant minister is not so favorable for becoming acquainted with the circumstances of the people, as that of one who is settled. But it requires only a short time for an industrious man to form all the acquaintance with the largest societies, that is necessary to a proper adaptation of his labors. A minister does not need to know every thing about his people. There is scarcely less danger of knowing too much, than there is of knowing too little. The success of the pulpit depends on the illustration and enforcement of the fundamentals of Christianity. These are adapted to every community, of every possible condition. He, therefore, who confines his pulpit discourses to these, is always appropriate, but never *personal.* To know more of his people—to understand their various notions, and petty differences, real and imaginary faults—may help him to preach more *personally*, but not more appropriately. But personalities in the pulpit are always impolitic, and out of place. They seldom fail to offend, and rarely benefit any one. Yet the same truths uttered by a stranger to the circumstances, so that the idea of personality cannot come into the account, may be useful. When the eccentric Lorenzo Dow described the character of one of his hearers, who had defrauded in

the matter of *measure*, she resolved on immediate reform, and retired to restore the bottom of her half bushel to its proper place. Had she supposed him to be personal, the result would probably have been different. But he was an entire stranger and knew nothing of her affairs.

Too much knowledge of the people, is also sometimes very perplexing to a minister. He may feel it to be his duty to discourse, for instance, upon the subject of temperance; but happening to have particular knowledge of the defects of certain of his members in the premises, is embarrassed. To do justice to his subject will offend them, and perhaps result in calling a parish meeting to dismiss him. Here is a difficulty. To determine what course to take will cost no little thought and anxiety. If he knew less about his people, he might come directly to the point, without embarrassment, and without incurring the charge of personality. For these reasons, itinerants have often refused to hear more of a society to which they have recently come than what was indispensable. They wished to feel no impediment to the discharge of their whole duty, and, therefore, determined "not to know any thing among" the people "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." All ministers might do well to exercise the same precaution.

But is it true that itinerant ministers have less useful knowledge of the people they serve than others? We think not. A few months' residence in a place is all the time a faithful minister needs to inform himself sufficiently for all practical purposes.

4. It is objected, that the piety of those who profess religion under the labors of itinerants, *is evanescent and worthless.* This is an old objection, but has no foundation in fact. Its falsity is sufficiently obvious from the avidity with which settled pastors receive converts from this quarter, to their churches. That some who profess religion under the labors of itinerant ministers apostatize from the faith, is admitted. But that the proportion of such converts is larger than is found under the stationed ministry, cannot be proved. If there are more in number, there are also more converted. If many fall away, many also persevere.

But it is a lamentable truth to which we can but advert in this place, that not a few who make shipwreck of their profession, do so by the proselytism of sectarian relatives, and others, who have taken no part in their conversion; or by the cold and faithless treatment they receive from those who ought to take them to their arms, as brethren beloved, and guide them in the way to heaven.

5. It is objected, that such a system may impose a minister upon a people, *who is not adapted to their wants, and one they do not like.* This is not denied, but it should not be forgotten that it also removes him at the end of the first year, or indeed before, if good and sufficient reasons can be given for so doing; and that without contention. This is an advantage which a well regulated system of itinerancy holds over the settled system.

But it is important to inquire, whether the most rigid Congregationalists never have a minister they do not esteem? The truth is, all their precaution in settling ministers, does not screen them from mistakes. Certificates of competent education, and other ministerial qualifications, with several trial sermons, the most satisfactory, are not sufficient. They often settle men, who, after a little better acquaintance, prove themselves unadapted to their wants. But it is now too late—they have no itinerant arrangement to take them off their hands, and must submit, or hazard a difficulty among themselves, in attempting to remove them.

It is a serious question, therefore, whether in the matter objected to, the itinerancy has not the decided advantage over the independent system. We believe it has, and appeal to the operation of the two systems, as well as to reason and philosophy, for our authority.

CHAPTER IV.

SOME THINGS NECESSARY TO CONSTITUTE AN ITINERANT MINISTRY EFFICIENT.

THE ultimate object of the ministry is to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." This embraces not only conversion to God, but the education and conformity of the whole being to his will. Now, for an itinerant ministry to be most successful in promoting this object, it seems necessary,

1. *That its operations be reduced to some system.* Men seldom do better than they determine on doing before hand, though they often fall short of their firmest resolves. Itinerants who have no settled plan of action, if they are faithful, will no doubt do some good, but their itinerancy, and the good which results from it, are very liable to be like the morning cloud. Governed by no system, pledged to no plan, they are exposed to various temptations they cannot be expected to endure. The offer of a fine situation and a good salary, or opposition from the settled clergy, which they

have to meet single handed, will probably divert them from their purpose; but should they have grace to withstand these things, and the like, is it to be presumed that they will go much into the highways and hedges, among "publicans and sinners," and seek for souls in the dregs of society? Or, traversing new countries, will they follow the emigrant to his rude home, and share the toil of a new settlement? Facts are against it. But should they, what is to become of those who are converted through their labors? Who is to watch over, and instruct them in the things of God? Left without a spiritual guide, there is little hope of their perseverance.

An itinerancy, then, to meet all the emergencies of the case, needs to be so systematized, as, *first*, to pledge the ministers to occupy that part of the field where their services are most needed, and to change, as circumstances may require. *Secondly*, to pledge the people to receive and sustain such ministers as may come to them, for the length of time which may be thought most for the interest of the whole work. And *thirdly*, as to lodge the executive supervision and direction of it in such hands as may be at once safe and effective.

2. The second thing necessary, therefore, is, that *ministers relinquish the right to choose their places of labor.* The best of ministers are but

men. That they have the abstract right to determine in what part of the *world* they will preach, is admitted. And that it is perfectly natural for them, in the exercise of this right, to choose places of comparative ease, safety and convenience, will not be denied. Nor that such places are generally occupied before others, less agreeable and often more encouraging to Christian enterprise. This is a fact which cannot be successfully questioned. And as such places afford facilities for usefulness as well as others, it is not uncharitable to conclude that they will have the best talents in the market, irrespective of the necessities of other places. Any thing like an efficient itinerancy, therefore, is utterly impracticable while each minister retains the right to make his own contracts, and preach where he pleases.

But here is a difficulty. Every principle of selfishness is opposed to the sacrifice. Every feeling of the natural man remonstrates against it. Pride, avarice, ambition, ease, and the fear of man forbid it. And nothing but the grace of God renewing the whole heart, and begetting a benevolence which seeks the salvation of men at the hazard of every earthly advantage, will enable ministers thus to surrender themselves, and especially, ministers of any considerable talent and

education. It is easier than to go to the cross, or the stake, certainly, but to abandon opulence, home, and many other pleasures, and venture out like Abram, not knowing whither we are going, with the strong liability of suffering the loss of all things, requires a moral heroism of no ordinary grade. But till men are prepared for this, they are not promising candidates for the work.

3. It is equally necessary that the people *relinquish the right to choose their minister.* While they retain this, it is reasonable to suppose that they will use all honorable means to procure a minister of talent, and retain him indefinitely, without reference to his adaptation to any other place. They are to provide for *themselves.* Selfishness requires the best there is to be obtained. If others need a minister, they will look out for one. Now, by the operation of this spirit, (and where is the society entirely free from it?) who does not see that a circulation of ministerial talent, beyond occasional exchanges, is utterly precluded? Talent will be distributed accordiug to the dictates of selfishness, rather than the interests of the cause, and will change only at the demand of the same principle.

To relinquish the right to choose its minister, a society of wealth and pleasant locality has a cross to bear, a sacrifice to make, even the sacrifice of

its selfishness. It has to give up what might seem its individual interests, for the good of the whole; and instead of holding Apollos permanently, to hold him only a small proportion of the time, and thus give others an opportunity to enjoy the benefit of his efficiency. It is not, therefore, remarkable that so few submit to itinerancy, considering that the moral feeling of the natural heart is against it.

4. The preachers having relinquished the right to choose their field of labor, and the people on their part to choose their preachers, it is necessary *that the authority to provide for both be vested in one or more persons*, who shall survey the whole field, study the qualifications, circumstances and wishes of the preachers, the condition, tastes and desires of the people, and then make such distribution of the various talents submitted, as may be most for the glory of God, and the benefit of all concerned. How many individuals should compose this body, or from what department of society they should be selected, admits of an honest difference of opinion. All, however, will agree, that it should be composed of men who are interested in the *general* cause, and who make great personal sacrifices for its promotion. Persons of a different mind and habit, could not be expected to investigate the matter sufficiently, to

make judicious appointments; and would lack an example of self-denial, which would be necessary to their influence and success in stimulating and inspiring the whole body, under the trials incident to the enterprise. They should not only be wise to command, but brave and energetic to share the labor and sacrifice of the cause. Like a valiant general, to thrust themselves into the hottest of the battle, hazarding all for the victory.

They should, *secondly*, be placed in circumstances of the greatest possible security from party bias. It would seem desirable, that they belong to neither party, and yet be capable of entering fully into the interests of both. If they be preachers to be stationed, it is impossible that selfishness should not tempt them in relation to their own appointments. If hearers, they will no doubt feel a stronger interest in their own, and neighboring societies than in any other. This is reasonable. Indeed it would not be possible to avoid it. To make them dependent upon individual contributions for their support, would be to tempt them to favor the rich of both parties from selfish considerations. They should, therefore, be supported in another way, if possible. This will prevent the temptation and remove all ground of suspicion arising from its existence. They ought also to be holden strictly amenable for their conduct, or

they may become indifferent to their high responsibilities, and even trespass upon the rights of their constituents. Besides, to get the information necessary to a sound judgment, and maintain a proper sympathy with the parties concerned, they need to travel through the whole territory embraced in the plan, and inquire into every part of the work.

Good men, men of God, who feel a holy interest in the salvation of souls, and love their brethren, thus guarded against all the evil passions and propensities of humanity, and acquainting themselves with the various talents in the ministry, and the circumstances of the people, can certainly judge better what is for the good of the cause in regard to the appointments, than the parties themselves, who are necessarily blinded by individual interests and limited views of all the facts in the case. This cannot be questioned for a moment. The parties may know what will *please* them most, and may even dispose of themselves profitably, so that the preacher shall not preach in vain, nor the people hear in vain. This is all well. But while the talented minister and the wealthy church are *pleasing* themselves, they may be enjoying less *profit* than would fall to their lot under a more benevolent arrangement; and others who are less fortunate, are actually suffering. Hence, high

Christian magnanimity requires, that the parties make common stock of themselves, and submit to whatever sacrifice may be necessary for the general good of the cause. Till they do this, and put their destiny, as we have suggested, out of their own hands, it is impossible to establish a permanent itinerancy, or any other arrangement, which will meet the exigencies of the world. Selfishness forbids it. But when we all throw ourselves into the work, like men in battle, ready to serve or be served in any part of the field, the desert shall blossom as the rose, the highways and hedges shall rejoice, "the poor have the gospel preached to them," and the disgraceful barter in clerical stocks come to an end.

5. To give successful operation to a system thus organized, it is important that preachers go to the respective places assigned them *cheerfully*. For them to feel oppressed and dissatisfied, because they have not an easier, or more eligible appointment, will cripple their energies, and destroy their influence, and particularly, if they go complaining. The people naturally infer that they think themselves too good for them, that they are looking more for the fleece than the flock, and more for ease than success. A complaining spirit is more disastrous to an itinerant's success than poverty or persecution. It ruins himself, first of

all, and then spreads a deadly infection through the whole community, blasting every good feeling and fair prospect, and shutting down the horizon in utter darkness around him.

To such a spirit, all are more or less liable. But we apprehend it will not be very troublesome to those who enter the itinerancy to *do good*, and who feel it an infinite honor to preach Jesus even to the poor. Men who take an appointment as the noble Athenian accepted an insignificant office, not for the *honor* of it, but to honor *it*,—not because it is a wealthy, or intelligent, or agreeable one, but to *make* it such, will feel thankful, rather than depressed and afflicted, that he has so good a place. The honor of the ministry is not in being appointed, or called to flourishing churches, but in *making* them. What matters it, how honorable the place is, where a minister preaches, if he does *nothing for God?* or how poor and despicable, if he wins souls to Christ? God will honor his servants, not according to the stations they have occupied, but according to the work they have done, and the sacrifices made. The man who comes from obscurity with his little retinue of souls, plucked from the teeth of the "roaring lion" in the mountains and deserts, will receive *double* honor. He is worthy of it. It has cost him something to be a minister of Christ. He has not

rolled in luxury, and enjoyed the hozannas of the multitude,—but has "*suffered* with Christ." He shall have his reward.

We say again, the itinerant must go to his work *cheerfully*, and make himself at home. This will create a corresponding feeling among his people, and open the way for success.

6. The people, on their part, should receive their preachers *cordially*, as though they had *called* them. Some ministers are prepared constitutionally, and by grace, to succeed under almost any treatment. They depend very little on sympathy. They are feared and reverenced at first sight, and their word is with power. But there are comparatively few of this description. The mass are less courageous, and more dependent on the smiles and co-operation of their brethren. To meet with a cold reception, dispirits and unmans them, and they long for a more congenial situation.

Societies which have practised a little reserve at first, as a matter of policy, cannot fully estimate the injury they have done to the feelings of their preachers, and to their own cause. However proper such a course may be in regard to suspicious strangers, it is most radically injurious in the case under consideration. It throws the most effectual barrier in the way of success that can

well be conceived. They ought to meet the man with a smile, and welcome him to their hearts and homes in the name of the Lord. No matter if they did expect another man; nor, that this man is not exactly what they could wish. They should receive him *cordially*, and make the most of him while he remains. If he be an inferior man, he certainly can do no good while under the frowns of the church, and if not, his influence will be greatly diminished. After all, if it be found that a mistake has been made, and the man is ill adapted to the place, the matter can be remedied in a constitutional, and pleasant way, much easier than if he had been treated coldly in the outset. It is to be hoped that all societies connected with the itinerancy, will bear this in mind. It will save them from many evils, and ensure success even where they expect a failure.

7. Finally, *fervent, profound piety* is indispensable to such a system. Being fraught with tremendous responsibility, sacrifice and labor, on all sides, it seems impossible that either party should adopt it with the intention of submitting to its regulations, but from the sublimest and purest considerations. And how can they be sustained in the actual experience of such sacrifices, surrounded by systems more attractive to the natural man, and pressed with urgent calls to accept lib-

eral salaries and popular societies, but by the same exalted principles. It is only when ministers are dead unto the world, and alive unto Christ, that they are equal to the task. Then they can say with the celebrated itinerant to the Gentiles, "Those things which were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, having the righteousness which is of God by faith."

One, thus consecrated to Christ, is prepared for the itinerancy, irrespective of the country or the fare, so that he may "finish his course with joy." He can adopt the expressive language of our illustrious poet, and sing, as he traverses the rugged paths of a self-sacrificing itinerancy:

"The love of Christ doth me constrain,
To seek the wandering souls of men;
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
And snatch them from the gaping grave.

For this let men revile my name,
No cross I shun, I fear no shame;
All hail reproach, and welcome pain,
Only thy terrors, Lord, restrain.

My life, my blood, I here present,
If for thy truth they may be spent;

Fulfil thy sovereign counsel, Lord,
Thy will be done, thy name adored.

Give me thy strength, O God of power!
Then let winds blow, or thunders roar,
Thy faithful witness will I be;
'Tis fixed; I can do all through thee."

Ministers of such a spirit are the men for this work. Their boast is not of personal accomplishments, not of popular applause, not of tempting calls to settlement, not of flattering titles, nor of petitions, and lucrative appointments. No, they boast that their "sufficiency is of God, who hath made them ministers of the New Testament"—and that they are called to the distinguished honor of being "ambassadors for Christ," and of sharing with him in the privations, labors, and dangers of subduing an alien world to God. If dissuaded from their daring purposes of aggression upon the strong holds of Satan, by the tears and entreaties of sympathizing friends, their prompt reply is, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus."

"Shall I, for fear of feeble man,
The Spirit's course in me restrain?
* * * * *
Awed by a mortal's frown, shall I
Conceal the word of God, Most High?

How then before Him shall I dare
To stand, or how his anger bear?"

Were all ministers deeply imbued with this heavenly principle, we should probably hear less lectures against an itinerant ministry, and less complaints of its hardships. And is it at all likely that there would be as frequent changes in the theological views and denominational relations of itinerants as there have been? Is it this which leads men to locate for filthy lucre—or to settle themselves down on one little spot in this great "world," upon a permanent salary? Is it in their burning and shining moments, that they take this course?—when they *feel*, "wo is me if I preach not the gospel?"

This spirit is also necessary for the people. When it declines, they will begin to desire to be like the "nations around them." They will want *their own* minister. They will wish to call him, and bargain with him, in other words, to become Congregationalists. We do not say that no Congregationalists have this spirit. Our remark is, that those who are connected with an itinerancy which looks at the general good of the cause of God, and sacrifices individual interests for that object, will become restricted in their feelings and plans, in proportion as they lose this

spirit, and hanker after a more selfish and popular economy. They will not be willing that the ministry shall be distributed as the real interests of the people require. If they are able, they will desire to buy up the best man in the Connection, and appropriate him to their own exclusive use. They will not be willing to pay their money to build meeting houses, and support preachers, and run their chance with poor societies of having first, second or third class ministers. They will pay, but then they want their choice in the men.

But let them feel the benevolence which "seeketh not her own," and "is not puffed up," but is "*kind*, and *endureth* all things" for the sake of Christ, and they will glory in being connected with such a system of sacrifice, that has God for its author, and the salvation of the world for its aim.

CHAPTER V.

THE SYSTEM OF ITINERANCY IN THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Having stated some things, necessary to constitute an itinerant ministry efficient, we will now proceed to consider the itinerancy of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In all essential points, it is the same of that adopted by Mr. Wesley, and which formed a distinctive feature in his system of operations. He was emphatically the father of it, and it is a brighter monument of his greatness than it is in the power of architecture to construct. The celebrated Dr. Witherspoon once remarked, that "he needed no other evidence that the Rev. John Wesley was a great man, than what the system of itinerating preaching presented to his mind, and of which that wonderful man was the author." Dr. Baird says the remark "was a just one," and adds, "It is a system of vast importance in every point of view, capable of being made to send its ramifications into almost every corner of the country, and to carry the glad

tidings of salvation into the most remote and secluded settlements, as well as to the more accessible and populous towns and neighborhoods. Thus the gospel is carried into thousands of remote spots, in which it never would be preached upon the plan of having a permanent clergy."

Other distinguished gentlemen of liberal sentiments and feelings, have bestowed similar encomiums upon this system, but its best defence is found in its intrinsic character and luminous history. It only needs to be understood to be admired. A cursory glance is not sufficient. It must be examined in all its *parts, in their connection.* It is an easy matter to say, that *this* is unnecessary, and *that* is an incumberance, but such remarks generally betray ignorance of the system.

The itinerancy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, whatever its specific character, is *providential.* Mr. Wesley, first of all, became an itinerant himself, and afterward, being earnestly solicited, took others under his watch-care and direction. As the work increased, both in Europe and America, and the number of his followers multiplied, the itinerancy became more and more systematized, till it grew up to its present order. Observe, it originated not with the *people,* or by their call, but with the *ministry,* for the purpose

of calling the people to Christ, and guiding them in the way to heaven. This explains how our conferences happen to be composed exclusively of itinerant ministers. The object of the first conference was to consult in regard to carrying on the work of God—to determine what *they*, the *itinerants*, would do. Others might have been good advisers, but reason dictates that those who do the work should determine how, and where they will do it. This the itinerant preachers have ever done—in other words, they have governed themselves. And varying their plans of operation to meet the emergencies of the cause, they have kept pace with the times, and increased both in numbers and influence.

In 1784, Mr. Wesley, in compliance with the earnest solicitations of preachers and people in this country, ordained Dr. Coke superintendent. He appointed Francis Asbury joint superintendent. In the month of September, Dr. Coke arrived at New York with his credentials of ordination. On the 25th of December following, a conference of the travelling preachers was convened at Baltimore. Sixty of the *eighty-three* preachers, then in the travelling connection, were present. Dr. Coke presided, assisted by Mr. Asbury. The first business done, was to choose Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury general superintendents or bishops, thus

confirming the appointment of Mr. Wesley. It was at this conference, that our Church took its present name and form of itinerancy. Various modifications have indeed been made, but not to alter the essential character of the system. Thus much historically may not be amiss, especially with certain "complainers." Attention to these few facts will the better prepare them to appreciate an economy which they are wont to disparage.

We will now glance at our itinerancy as it is, remarking upon the several branches of it as we pass.

1. The power of appointing the preachers to their fields of labor, lies with our general superintendents, who are required "to travel through the connection at large, and oversee the temporal and spiritual business of our church." These duties have an intimate connection, and both together form an amount of responsibility and labor beyond the capacity of ordinary minds. To make the appointments judiciously, it is necessary for the superintendents to know the men, and to know something of the character, circumstances and wants of the people. And how can they have this knowledge but by travelling, meeting the preachers in conference, and acquainting themselves with the situation of the churches? It is

impossible. And if it were not, there would be important reasons for their general circulation. The submission of the preachers to the arrangement is voluntary. They cannot be driven, though they may be led. A lordly, idle bishop could do nothing with them; while one who is himself "more abundant in labors" and self-denials, will find them submissive even to martyrdom. In such an one, they have both a noble examplar and a sympathizing friend—an indomitable leader and a Christian brother.

By having a general charge, and travelling "*through the connection*," they feel a general interest, without those local partialities which blind and warp the judgment. And being provided for from *general* resources, they are comparatively incapable of being bribed, or unduly influenced by pecuniary considerations. And to bind them still firmer to the discharge of their high trust, their official conduct is carefully recorded by those over whom they preside, and they are holden to a strict account for every part of it, as well as for their more private deportment.

Under these arrangements, our episcopacy has thus far succeeded to admiration. Though individuals have complained, we believe it has the hearty confidence and approval of ninety-nine hundredths of our numerous societies. And not

the less so for the fruitless experiments which have been made upon it by seceding factions. Nevertheless, it has strong opposers. Coming in collision with hoary systems, and at times with the ease and convenience of individuals and societies, it has been attacked from various directions, to suit the taste of the assailant.

The warmest opposition, however, comes from old friends and coadjutors in the itinerant work. Having "gone out from us" in one way or another, and for reasons which it is not now necessary to consider, they have set themselves at work, as if by compact, to overthrow the system. It is needless to record all their movements. But while we are speaking of bishops, it may be proper to say that these reformers are against them *toto coelo*. They propose that we annually elect a President and a stationing committee, as a substitute, in the style of our English brethren. But this will not do. It works hard, indeed, with them, but it is still less adapted to us.

However it might do, were New England alone involved in the matter, and had we but one conference, and that a corporate body, bound by charter to such an arrangement, it is not at all appropriate to our circumstances. We are spread over a vast territory, divided into many conferences, and yet have one common interest, which it

is infinitely important to maintain, but which cannot long survive the ruin of a common superintendency. Without multiplying words upon the question of bishops or no bishops, we will simply remark, that our reformers have probably learned that their plan appears better on paper and in eloquent speech, than in actual operation. If they have not, it will avail little to debate the question with them.

In regard to the *power* of the bishops, our old friends object with much emphasis. They cannot away with it, though they have clean escaped its influence. May they long live to be more happy and useful than when in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

That our bishops have power vested in them, is admitted. Not so much, however, as formerly, it not being necessary in the present state of the work; and not half what is attributed to them by our opponents. It is often said, that they own our churches, and may sell or shut them at pleasure, than which, nothing is more false. In this respect they stand exactly on a par with all others. They own just what they have purchased, and paid for, and no more. And that they have acquired the ownership of so much as a single *pew*, we have yet to learn. We hope that when our opponents find it necessary to issue a new edi-

tion of this injurious charge, they will furnish the evidence upon which it is based.

Nor have they power to expel members from the church, as has been falsely reported. Why will not our brethren have the candor to examine the discipline upon these points? We fear they do not wish to know the truth. But the work of our bishops is important. It is to superintend the affairs of the church, and direct the preachers to their respective fields of labor, so as to keep them in efficient circulation through the whole country. Besides, it devolves on them to preside in the conferences, and ordain such persons to the office of the ministry as the conferences may elect. This is about the general sum of their duties, and to do this they are fully empowered by the body which appointed them. And is this giving them too much power? An officer without authority to execute the duties of his office, is a nullity. It is the power he receives that constitutes the office. The feature in the power of our bishops which gives most offence, is that by which they appoint the preachers. And yet it is to this that many of our societies owe their existence.

They have been raised up and sustained by men of talents they never would have *seen*, but for this very power. And many are now sustained, which, were they to reject it, would not survive

three years. If any doubt, let them consult the history of those who have repudiated the episcopacy within the last twenty years, and they will need nothing farther.

To the question whether this power may not be abused, we answer, it certainly may; though we believe power is seldom better guarded. This is a risk which is run in all cases of office and agency, both in church and state, and cannot be avoided. The President of the United States is possessed of very large power to use for the public good, but he may pervert it to a very wicked purpose. Take it away, and he becomes a man of straw, so far as his office is concerned. It is the *power* that makes the President. And so it is with our supreme judges, and other national officers. There is a liability to abuse, but it must be submitted to, or the office abandoned.

In estimating the danger of the power vested in our superintendents, it should be taken into the account, that while there is piety in the ministry, the wisest and best of men will be selected for the office,—men who have a deep interest in the welfare of the whole church, and therefore indisposed to abuse their power. *Secondly*, that they receive most of the information upon which they act, from the presiding elders, with whose counsel and advice the appointments are made. *Thirdly*,

that there can be no motive to induce them to abuse their power. And *fourthly*, that their whole administration is under the eye of the church, to the itinerant ministry of which, they are strictly amenable, and by which they may be displaced from office, and even expelled from the church. If more is necessary to induce confidence, we may add, they have exercised the power they now possess, for many years, with the greatest safety, and the happiest results. Where, then, is the danger? With whom, or how could the power to station the preachers, be better, or more safely lodged? To restore it to preachers, and people, and leave them to make their own selections, would end the itinerancy, and constitute us Congregationalists. To vest it in a committee, to be composed of ministers or laymen, or an equal number of each, would be impolitic. *First*, because being parties personally concerned, however disposed to act discreetly, selfishness would unavoidably affect their decisions. At all events, it would be supposed to, by those who might be displeased with their appointments, and broils and dissentions would not fail to ensue. *Secondly*, it would be impossible for such a committee to obtain the information necessary to make the appointments appropriately. They might receive petitions and representations, but those are often *ex-*

parte, and therefore not to be relied on. They would need the counsel of an impartial and discriminating brother, who had himself visited the societies and studied their condition, and made himself acquainted with the qualifications of the preachers.

We sometimes hear it objected to this system, that the people have no voice in the appointments. If this means that they cannot choose their own preachers, it is true. But in this respect they stand exactly on a par with the preachers. If it means precisely as its language imports, it is not true, as will hereafter appear. But should an offensive appointment be made, there is a remedy. *First*, a change may be asked, and if the request can be supported by good reasons, it will, no doubt, be granted. But, *secondly*, should it not be, and still a majority of the society desire it, they may withhold the preacher's support. This is their security, and it is enough. As a distinguished seceder remarked, "let the people hold their purse-strings, and they have nothing to fear from the clergy." *They* have ever held them with us, and we rejoice in it. It is safe for them, and we can live by it, if faithful to God.

2. Perhaps this is the proper place to bring into more particular view another agency which legitimately belongs to the system—I mean the *pre-*

siding eldership. It is a question with many whether this office is necessary. And it has even been proposed to dispense with it, or so to modify it, as to destroy its identity. The matter, however, has not been much discussed. All, we believe, would be glad to abandon it, if it could be done without damage to the system; at least, we see no reason why they should not. It is not, certainly, a very agreeable office, at present, nor is it at all lucrative; and as to the duties and responsibilities of it, they are second only to those of the episcopacy.

Speaking of our church as though it had not been rent in twain, it extends over this whole country, states, territories, Texas, and all. Our bishops are seven in number. They have to attend *thirty-nine* annual conferences, some of which are separated from each other by thousands of miles, and to assign from *four* to *five thousand* preachers their places of labor. Now, a moment's reflection will show, that seven men, however effective, cannot possibly exercise a very particular supervision over so many ministers, and members, spread over so much territory. If it be possible for them to see all the preachers, they can visit but very few of the societies. And to form a personal acquaintance, so as to make intelligent appointments, is utterly out of the question,—they cannot do it.

To supply this lack of service, the several conferences are divided into districts, embracing from twelve to fifty societies, upon each of which an elder is placed, who is to exercise about the same oversight in the absence of a bishop, he would exercise if he were present. The duties of the presiding elder are matters of distinct record, and need no explanation. By travelling through his district once a quarter, he becomes familiar with all the preachers, their habits, health, qualifications, peculiarities and usefulness, and their reception among the people. Holding a quarterly conference with the official members of each society, and mingling with the private members as he necessarily does in love-feasts, and other associations, he becomes acquainted with their circumstances and wants. In the exercise of a general supervision in his district, he is often found consulting with the stewards about the support of their preachers,—examining the leaders, instructing, exhorting, advising and reproving the preachers, and sometimes changing them; examining candidates for the ministry, writing licenses, deeds and contracts for meeting-houses; hearing complaints, and trying appeals, &c., indeed, doing every thing necessary to give greater efficiency to the work. It is his duty to survey every part of the field assigned him,—to

know all that is going, and see that all goes right.

By pursuing this course, when he meets the bishop at the annual conference he is prepared to represent both preachers and people, and to give an impartial and enlightened judgment in regard to the appointments. By the aid of presiding elders of mature piety and discrimination, who devote themselves to their peculiar work, the bishops are enabled so to distribute the various talents of the ministry, as to please and profit all parties. Errors sometimes occur, of course, and they will, while "to err is human." But to judge of the plan by these errors would be unfair, and contrary to established principles. By this rule, nothing short of absolute perfection could abide. All we ask is, that the plan be judged of by its general principles and operations, and we will submit.

To make the appointments without this amount of knowledge, is impossible. And to procure the knowledge in a cheaper, and less exceptionable way, is, to say the least, very difficult. If we were to multiply our superintendents, so that they might visit the societies themselves, we might in this way get the knowledge, but it would not lessen the expense, or save men for the stations. We are not aware that this is seriously thought of.

To give the oversight of several societies to a

stationed preacher, and let him perform the double duty of pastor and chairman of a district, has been proposed, and it is about the only substitute for the presiding eldership which is urged with any confidence. But this cannot work among us at present. The time may come when it will, but, "it is not yet." A few suggestions will be sufficient to show the impracticability of the change.

In the first place, it must be remembered, that in many parts of our work there are not half a dozen societies within fifty miles of any one point. And to put twice that number under the care of a pastor any where, except in our cities and larger towns, would impose on him the necessity of considerable travelling and much absence from home. Now, what society would wish a pastor, who would have such responsibilities abroad? Would our larger stations be willing to be supplied with local preachers, and young and inexperienced itinerants, while their pastor should be away, attending to his district duties, administering the sacrament, the ordinance of baptism, &c.? Or, would they be willing to have him absent during the week, as he must necessarily be more or less? We have no hesitancy in saying, that it would not be endured with patience. The case is very different between New England and

Old England, and, indeed, between this country and most other parts of the world. But suppose the people were willing to submit, how would the *preachers* enjoy it? How many would be willing to do the duties of a presiding elder in some dozen appointments? There are few, we apprehend, who would dare to undertake it. But the greatest difficulty would be, after all, in making out the appointments. The "*chairmen*" must be the bishop's counsel, and represent the preachers and people of their respective districts. Of course they would have to represent themselves, their own wishes and feelings, as they are to be stationed, as well as others. Now, it would be very *unnatural* for them not to feel a little extra interest in their own cases,—very. At all events, they would be suspected, and if they should not receive a full share of the inferior appointments, there would be rebellion among the preachers at once. And if they should happen to fall among people who are not pleased with them, they could not avoid the suspicion of having procured their own appointment. The experiment, we apprehend, would be any thing but pleasant, and it would not be remarkable if both preachers and people should wish to return to the presiding eldership, which entirely excludes selfishness from the cabinet.

If any ask why this plan may not work here as well as in England, I reply, 1. That in England the whole work lies within a very narrow compass, and is therefore accessible and manageable as ours is not, and cannot be. They have one conference only, embracing the itinerant talent of the entire Connection. 2. Their chairmen are not necessarily connected with their appointing committee. 3. There is not the difference in their appointments which exists among us. Our appointments pay a minister from fifty dollars, to one thousand dollars. And the same difference exists in regard to the locality of the appointments, stretching all the way along from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rocky Mountains. Some are easy of access, and very agreeable, while others are extremely different. By consequence, it is a matter of great interest to a minister where he goes, and especially one with a family. But in England distance is hardly an item of thought, roads and conveyances nearly perfect, no furniture to move, it being furnished by each circuit, good help provided, and the disciplinary allowance, which is ample, paid to the last farthing, whether the society be rich or poor, great or small. The only choice, therefore, among healthy men, is merely a matter of taste. Place us in the condition of our English brethren financially, to say

nothing about other matters, and we could well endure to be appointed by chairmen, however closely they might look after their own interests. But while it is a case of life and death, as it actually is in some parts of this country, and of competence, poverty and suffering, as in a majority of cases, it is desirable to leave as little room for selfishness in the cabinet as possible. The difference is infinite. Assure us of a competent support, of the payment of our travelling and other contingent expenses, and of sufficient domestic help; and what would we care about our appointments. We could refer this matter to a committee, and go into conference, and debate the appointments in as good temper as our English brethren do, to say the least; but as things are, to adopt their policy either in regard to bishops or presiding elders, would be extremely hazardous.

The philosophy of human nature makes this certain as fate; and if it did not, the failures of our experimenting seceders admonish us to beware how we attempt to imitate our transatlantic brethren. Our presiding eldership has worked well thus far in connection with our episcopacy,—it was never doing better than now; let us cherish it as an integral part of the system, and leave others to experiment, who have not so much at stake. It costs something, to be sure, but not

more, generally, than it is really worth. Presiding elders are frequently helping churches out of difficulty, and giving them counsel and encouragement of great value. It is commonly through them that they receive their preachers, and that preachers are removed, if it becomes necessary. And after all, it do n't cost our societies one half to settle and unsettle their preachers that it does other denominations. One *ordination* and *dismission* costs some Congregational societies more than they would pay a presiding elder, as Methodists, in five or ten years. And yet they are not generally better satisfied with their preachers than our people. This is an interesting fact, to which the disaffected are desired to look. The writer has been astonished at the result of his own investigations in the premises, and he would commend the subject to the careful attention of all concerned.

But it is objected, that quarterly meetings are not as interesting as formerly. This is admitted. Formerly, when Methodist societies were few and far between, and had but little preaching in any one place,—few meeting houses, and no Sabbath schools to require their attention at home, and especially when they were persecuted and treated as outcasts by other sects, quarterly meetings were important occasions. Brethren assembled from a

great distance, to exchange sympathies, hear the word of God, and get strengthened for new conflicts. This was the result of their scattered, lonely, and destitute condition. Restore those circumstances, and old fashioned quarterly meetings will follow as a sort of moral necessity. But this, we apprehend, is not desired. We prefer to be more numerous and influential,—have regular preaching, and other religious privileges at home, though they may detract somewhat from the interest of quarterly meetings.

But notwithstanding the changes referred to, these great occasions are important, and we believe, in some degree practicable. They exert an excellent influence in counteracting our tendency to localism, and create a sympathy between adjoining societies, which is very pleasant and profitable. Besides, they present an aspect of prosperity, and otherwise contribute to the interests of the cause, in more ways than we have room to mention.

To abolish the presiding eldership is not certainly the way to promote these occasions. Nor can we reasonably adopt any circuit system, which will do it. And however desirable it may be to have the office filled by popular men, no ordinary popularity in the officer is sufficient. Brethren must *first* be made to feel the importance of the

object to the interests of the cause, and then determine on securing it. Not by giving up every thing at home, but by making arrangements, so that many may attend the quarterly meetings, and yet, the regular service be maintained, for the benefit of those who are deprived of the privilege. The writer is acquainted with one preacher in particular, who finds it convenient to make quarterly meetings what they ought to be. We have seen him on these occasions several miles from home, with from *forty* to *seventy* of his flock, cheering up the weaker parts of the circuit, and gathering fresh inspiration for himself and his people, for prosecuting the itinerant work. We have just met him on one of those occasions, and surely it was a time of refreshing from the presence of God, and all hearts seemed to feel it good to be there. Let every preacher exert himself a little in this way, and our quarterly festivals will be restored to their original interest.

3. These being the arrangements adopted by the church for the operation of the itinerancy, preachers entering the ranks, relinquish the right of selecting their place of labor, and submit to them. They do it voluntarily, from a sense of duty. The church has no power to coerce them, and desires none. They have rights like other men, and may determine their course, amenable

only to the Master. If they are received, it is by application to the quarterly conference, where they belong, composed chiefly of laymen. Here they obtain a recommendation to the annual conference, into which body they are admitted on trial, and into full connection after two years. Thus, deliberately devoting themselves to the work, they are bound by their own choice to conform to its regulations, and go to such fields as are assigned them. They are not at liberty to select for themselves, or to enter into any negotiations with the people, with a view to obtain a particular appointment. This is utterly at variance with the system, and as we shall hereafter show, threatens its existence. Yet it is perfectly consistent for them to represent their situation to the superintendent, especially if it be peculiar. The only difficulty in this is, brethren are liable to be more emphatic than is suitable, and if their wishes are not gratified, to be offended and complain. They don't consider that other preachers have claims, or that the wishes of the people are to be consulted, as well as their own. They look at the matter in one aspect only, and thus are deceived. If they will put themselves in the bishop's place, they may conceive many reasons why they should not be indulged.

To make our security against oppression com-

plete, we are at liberty to retire from the work at any moment, without impeachment. This is often done, and after a little respite many have returned to live and die in the ranks.

4. Societies coming into this arrangement surrender the right to choose their own preachers, and engage to receive such as are sent to them. They accordingly secure the use of their pulpits to the church. This is indispensable. If societies insist on choosing their preachers, preachers will insist on choosing their places, and here is an end to any thing like a uniform and permanent itinerancy. All these things cannot co-exist.

The people, however, may represent their situation and express their wants to the *superintendent*, but the least attempt at a negotiation with the preachers, is an infringement of the plan,—a breach of solemn contract. It is clandestinely exercising a right they have relinquished openly, and the best name we can allow for it is "*pious fraud.*"

There are other important points more or less connected with this system, but they will be sufficiently canvassed elsewhere. The object of this chapter is more particularly to exhibit the motive power of the system, and its auxiliaries, and vindicate them against the aspersions of opponents.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME SOURCES OF DANGER TO THE ITINERANCY OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

From what has been said, it is obvious that a system of efficient itinerancy is necessarily a system of *sacrifice*. There is a relinquishment of individual rights and privileges for the general good, which will operate with more or less severity upon the individual happiness of the parties concerned. Thus the preacher, for instance, will occasionally find himself associated with a people ill adapted to his personal tastes and predilections, and yet, perhaps, the very people who ought to feel his influence, and be moulded by his manners and instructions. And portions of the people in their turn, will be served by preachers not so agreeable to them as others they might select. Besides, many preachers will be compelled to serve for less compensation than they could obtain in other appointments in our church, and much less than they might receive in other denominations. And the people will be liable to have preach-

ers with them, whose actual necessities will require of them larger contributions than they find it convenient to make.

Now that these, and similar liabilities ought to be looked after in a proper way, and obviated so far as practicable, consistent with the interests of the work, is certain. But there is danger of allowing them to exert so great an influence as to carry us into measures not recognized by the system, and dangerous to its legitimate operation and even to its existence. Such cases have no doubt occurred, and their effect has been what might have been expected. And while these liabilities exist, (and they are incident to any system of itinerancy worthy of the name,) we may expect their *re*-currence, and should guard against them with all proper precaution. To facilitate this object, we propose to specify a few particulars, and discuss them with the greatest frankness. And we have to beg the reader not to suspect us of being personal because we describe things as he has actually seen them. We mean to be pointed, but not personal—to reform and not to offend.

1. The practice of *preachers seeking the most lucrative and agreeable appointments* by negotiation with the people, is an infringement of our itinerant system, and dangerous to its existence. That this practice exists among us to some extent,

will not be denied. However adroitly concealed, it is understood both by preachers and people. And if we mistake not, it is as generally condemned in *the abstract* as it is known. Even those who are most involved in it, do not pretend that it is Methodistical or safe, as a general practice. But we fear the evil is not fully estimated, either in its nature or tendencies.

It has already been shown, that in becoming itinerants we relinquished the right to choose our own field of labor, in other words, to negotiate with the people to become their preacher, and submitted ourselves to the appointing power of the church. Here was a solemn contract entered into by us, and the ministers who received us to their connection, of which the practice under consideration is a most palpable violation. This may be seen by considering whether we should have been received, had we announced it as our purpose to pursue this course, when our case was pending. Every brother can see at once, that he would not have been received under these circumstances. It was upon his pledge to submit to the *rules* of itinerancy, that he was admitted to the travelling connection. This practice, then, is a breach of positive contract—an unconstitutional, and, therefore, an unfair effort to possess himself of what may belong to another. Instead of stand-

ing on an equal footing with his brethren, and taking his chance with them, according to agreement, he stealthily resumes his relinquished rights, and takes advantage of the other parties to the contract, and perhaps crowds those who are entitled by reason of their talents and faithfulness to first-rate stations, into inferior ones. It is a dishonest game, at best, which preachers of the gospel ought to blush to play, at any price.

The fact that the final determination of the matter lies with the superintendent, does not essentially alter the case. To visit a people, and preach trial sermons, in fact, if not in name, with a view of getting a call,—promising to be stationed with a people if they can get the bishop to make the appointment, and encouraging extra efforts, such as sending formal petitions, and special committees to conference, is nearly tantamount to making the contract outright. It is contrary to the spirit of the plan, and places the presiding bishop in circumstances where he must ratify the appointment *nolens volens*, or give offence, which may occasion him interminable trouble. And, thus, it is wronging the superintendent, by imposing a burden upon him he never ought to be compelled to bear. His work is sufficiently laborious and perplexing at best, and such a movement is unfair and subversive of the

natural operation of the system. Perhaps, when he comes to sit down to the difficult business of making out the appointments, it will appear to him and his counsel as clear as light, that the contracting preacher ought to remain in his own conference, and not be transferred, or go to another appointment where no man who is to be removed can do as well. Perhaps, too, he finds it convenient to supply the contracting people even better, the contract aside, than he would by granting their petition. Here is a dilemma. What can the man do? The interests of the work of God, and this private negotiation are at variance. Another preacher the contracting people will not pleasantly receive, and their pledged favorite will feel wronged, if he is not indulged.

Let it not be said that these suppositions are impracticable, and therefore they exaggerate the evil. It is not so. They only express what has frequently occurred. And were the practice complained of to become general, such difficulties would become absolutely insurmountable, and the system go to utter ruin. And what is to hinder its becoming general, if it be countenanced. Can we calculate that brethren will consent to be appointed to places which have been spoiled for them by previous negotiations with other men? Or that they will consent to occupy places which these

negotiators did not think worthy of their notice? Or, is it more probable that they will follow the unworthy example set them, and throw off all pretence to itinerancy? The latter is decidedly the more honorable course. But in either case, the itinerancy will lose its power, if not its existence.

For preachers to negotiate to *locate* and serve a society, as a sort of settled pastor, is also disasterous. No brother who respects the cause of Christ, and the interests of the church, will take such a course. It can only originate in supreme selfishness; and however isolated cases may be sustained, its direct tendency is to destroy the system.

2. The practice of the people *petitioning preachers*, to procure their services, is a dangerous invasion of our plan. To petition the *bishop* directly, or through the presiding elder, representing their condition, and wants, is perfectly proper, as we have before intimated, because he is the functionary to whom they have surrendered their respective rights in the premises. But to petition the *preachers*, is to act, as far as it goes, precisely as though no such surrender had been made, and is, therefore, a violation of the compact entered into, and an injustice to the other parties. To illustrate—A, is a large and pleasant society, in an agreeable location, and gives its preacher a com-

fortable support. B, C, D, F, are itinerants, and parties to the contract, all good men, and eligible to be stationed at A, in the regular operation of the system. But the members of A, fearing they shall not get the best man, send for D, who has a high reputation, to visit them, with the view, if they are pleased with him, of securing his services the next year. He comes, and is admired. Application is made to *him* to become their next preacher,—a good salary is promised,—it is talked through the society, that he is *willing*, and even *desires* to come. Some will give so much to support him, and some will leave if they are not accommodated; and now, a delegation is despatched to the bishop to represent the necessity of the case, and secure the appointment. So, with powers, plenipotentiary, they hasten to the seat of the conference, have another interview with their candidate, and then, taking the bishop aside, they represent the *peculiarity* of their situation, *just at this time*, and so standing by to the last, they obtain their man. Thus the weaker society, G, to which, in the judgment of all, D would have been sent had there been no interference, leaving itself in the hands of the appointing power, in good faith, is *defrauded* of its legitimate rights, by underhanded manœuvring, which has compelled the bishop, as the least of evils thrust upon him, to ap-

point D to A. Now we ask if A is not guilty of a dishonest violation of the compact existing between it and G? In a matter of worldly business, such conduct would be called *fraud.* Is it any better in this case? If G had known what was being done, it might have created a counter necessity, and averted the threatened wrong. But, its integrity to contract, has been taken advantage of, to its injury. Nor have the other societies been used better, though they may not so immediately suffer. The movements of A, are against them all, and imply a willingness to wrong them all, for its own gratification. If D be a member of another conference, where his services are much needed, or, has been in his station but one year when these operations commence, (which is sometimes the case,) the injustice of A is more striking, though not more real.

But this procedure is a wrong done to preachers as well as people. There may be *twenty* in the conference who have higher claims to the honors of A, than D has. But, by this conspiracy, they are thrown back into less desirable places, and are thus tempted, either to abandon the itinerancy utterly, or to electioneer for themselves, and cripple its energies.

Looking at this practice in whatever aspect we may, it presents but one appearance. There is

not a redeeming quality about it. No lover of Methodism, who understands its nature and bearings, will countenance it for one moment. It is a bold infraction of the system, which cannot consist with its permanent existence.

If it be said in apology for those who pursue this course, that societies are often in circumstances to require a particular preacher, it is admitted. But, generally, those circumstances are of the people's own make. Frequently it is done by building large and expensive churches, and thereby contracting a heavy debt, which cannot be managed without a large congregation. Hence the country must be scanned to find a man that can fill the house. And if one is sent who fails of this object, he must be peaceably removed, however good and strong, or the society will rebel, or sink under the debt. Those who will take the pains to examine the history of such houses, and debts, will find they have been a great annoyance to the itinerancy. Men have been rejected, or have failed of success, who, under common circumstances, would have done well. The opinion is, therefore, well founded, that societies had better worship in a barn or in the open air, than to erect houses which required clerical prodigies to sustain them. It is a dangerous expedient, which has caused the church immense trouble. And as

it is in this case, so it is in most others, the circumstances which are plead in apology for this *excuria* procedure, are creatures of the people, and ought to be avoided. But where they are unavoidable, they furnish no apology for infringing the itinerant plan. The emergency can be met in a better way. Let the people give the *bishop* a faithful representation of their case, and look to *God* in prayer, determined to prosper under whoever may come, and they will seldom fail.

3. The practice of *individuals refusing* to support preachers, because they do not happen to be pleased with them, though the majority of the church are, is another source of danger to the itinerancy. It is allowed that the people may refuse to support their preacher, and that this would be justifiable, as a last resort, in case they are oppressed, and cannot obtain redress by the milder means of remonstrance and petition. And this is as it ought to be. We would, by no means, give preachers any other than a moral hold upon the purses of the people. And we cannot deny that *individuals* have the civil right to refuse to support their preachers, where the majority esteem them, either with or without cause. But nothing can be more certain than that this practice is subversive of the best interests of the church. Generally adopted, it would keep our societies in

perpetual agitation, and reduce them to a worthless mass of discords. Being young, and not wealthy, union is indispensable to existence. All must act in concert, or the cause will decline. If one may refuse to support *this* preacher because he is not a favorite, or because of some prejudice against him, others may refuse to support *that*, for the same reason. And if this should be recognized as a correct principle, no year would pass without more or less difficulties from this quarter, as no one preacher can possibly be the favorite of all. Besides, there are some, no doubt, who would not scruple to invent objections to a preacher, if by so doing they could honorably refuse to support him. The principle furnishes a strong temptation to the avaricious to disaffection, and is, therefore, wrong and ruinous. We believe it to be strictly anti-Methodistical. To adopt it, is an attempt to control by our *money*, what we have submitted to the direction of other causes, and is putting *ourselves* in the place of God, and the best interests of the church. The true Christian policy is, to support the preacher, and make the most of him, whether *we* are particularly pleased or not, provided the society, as such, does not see cause to adopt he extreme measure of withholding his support. It is *the cause of Christ* and the church, which is to be consulted,

and not our *prejudices*. Will my withholding support from God's minister be the best I can do for the *cause*, is the question, and not whether it will gratify *my feelings*. If others are pleased and profited by his labors, that is reason enough why I should sustain him, though, as an *individual*, I may dislike him. This is the true magnanimity of Methodism, and is fatal to that narrow selfishness which supports the gospel only so far as may be necessary to gratify personal prejudices and predilections. And, every departure from this practice, is hazardous to the itinerancy, since it is calculated to embarrass the preacher financially, and necessitate him to resort to some different system under which his support will not depend upon so many contingencies.

4. One of the principal dangers to this system, is found in certain measures which are sometimes adopted to *procure the removal of preachers from a place at the close of their first year*. The labor and perplexity of moving, as much as we are obliged to, is very great. To be forced to move, therefore, when it is not plainly required by our rules, or the good of the cause, is trying to one's feelings. Now, our rules allow us to remain in a place two successive years, and reason and common observation teach, that this is as often as it is necessary for men of ordinary qualifi-

cations and industrious habits to move. Such men, need not fail of filling up this brief period profitably.

And, by comparing those societies which retain their preachers two years, with those which change annually, it will be seen that they have a decided advantage. They are generally more stable and intelligent. A too frequent change of ministers tends to excitability and vacillation, as their permanent settlement does to stupefaction and spiritual decay. It is, therefore, the opinion of many among us, that, *two* years ought to be regarded as the rule, *one* the exception; and accordingly unless objections are made to it, either by the preachers or their societies, it should be expected that preachers will remain the second year, except where there are imperative claims for their services in another place. Either may propose a change to the *appointing officer*, and assign all the reasons for desiring it, in perfect accordance with the system, and without offence; provided, it be done at a proper time and in a proper way; and with the understanding, that, if he, after an impartial examination of the whole case, judges it best, all things considered, for their connection to continue another year, they shall submit peaceably, as though no change had been proposed. The danger lies in restless disaffected

individuals interfering as they ought not, so as, by agitating, to make it exceedingly unpleasant, and perhaps, unprofitable, for the preacher to remain. This may be done under the cover of high professions, and on pretence of seeking the good of the cause, where a wicked and indomitable selfishness lies at the bottom. The preacher has in some way, perhaps, given offence, or failed to please a few, or they know of another preacher, they imagine, who would suit them better; so to effect a change, they commence operations some months, peradventure, before conference, and mournfully complain of specific acts, or neglects of the preacher, and of the consequent coldness of the church. They sometimes report for fact that the congregation, classes, and Sabbath school, are on the decline; or, if this is too palpably false to state, they confidently prophesy that they will decline. If the stewards and others neglect their duty, so that the preacher's support is behind, this is all attributed to *his* unpopularity. It is affirmed that it is impossible to support him another year, and to prove it, they sometimes retail what they have heard each other say, or have surmised. And if all this sort of thing, carried on out of sight, is not likely to secure the object, they will bring matters to an open rupture, and thus create a state of things by conference time, which will

render it hazardous, both for preacher and people, for him to remain, and not less so for him to leave.

That our church has been infested with a few such intermeddlers with constitutional itenerancy, is undeniable, however mortifying the fact. They are generally persons of some peculiarities, and often of very nice consciences about "mint, annis and cummin,"—difficult to please, inclined to complain of the *present*, and glorify the *past*,—ignorant and covetous, and yet withal, they have some qualities strangely intermingled, which, under circumstances favorable to their indescribable temperaments, render them useful. But as they are *few* in number, and we trust growing less every year, it is hardly worth while to say much concerning them.

Efforts are sometimes made for the same object from better motives, and in a better spirit, which are nevertheless injurious and hurtful. The preacher's feelings are injured, parties are formed, and prejudices are engendered, which are calculated to alienate both preachers and people from the system. How such things may be avoided is an important question, upon which a few suggestions may not be out of place.

(1.) Let all our societies fix it in their minds, that their preacher will, (especially if he has a family,)

remain with them two years, unless there shall be good and sufficient reasons for his removal at the close of the first year. This is a great point to gain, particularly for certain ultraists, who hold, that a minister ought to move annually, whatever the circumstances. And to facilitate the object, brethren will do well to take the minutes for the last ten years, and sit down and study the history of our churches in reference to this single point. They will be surprised at the result of the investigation.

If any thing farther be necessary, let them in imagination take the preacher's place,—just settled, sympathies and affections aroused; work perhaps successfully begun, or, at least, there are no reasons existing why he may not succeed; and short of money,—and see whether they would think it fair for measures to be adopted to effect their removal at the end of the first year. A little reflection of this sort, will be sufficient to expose the unfairness of such a course, and bring all our members to the determination to retain their ministers the second year, if possible, except where there are substantial reasons for a change. If doing unto others as we would that they should do unto us, is a principle for which they have the least respect, such a conclusion is inevitable.

(2.) But should it be thought, that there are rea-

sons sufficient to demand a change at the close of the first year, and measures are in contemplation to effect it, brethren will do well to inquire how many personal friends of the preacher will feel afflicted by the operation. This is not sufficiently considered. Every preacher has his friends. Those who are most exposed to criticism and disaffection, while they are extremely disliked by some, are proportionably esteemed by others. Disaffected brethren should consider, therefore, whether it be not better for the church to endure the weakness and infirmity of the preacher another year, than to afflict and alienate his friends, by taking measures for his removal. It is seldom, we believe, that a church is divided by retaining its preacher, but no year passes, without many being more or less injured by the removal of preachers contrary to their wishes, and the wishes of their friends. Brethren are often deceived in this matter. Because they hear some little dissatisfaction expressed by members of the church and congregation, they take it for granted that an effort to remove him will be approved, but on making the experiment, they find their mistake. His friends are afflicted and become more friendly,—the sympathies of some of his enemies and many neutrals are aroused in his favor, and a deep prejudice against those who oppose him, is the

result. Thus the church is distracted with party contests, if not divided and overthrown. The evil of such a movement is greater than is connected with retaining almost any preacher in the Connection. *Weakness*, and even imprudence in a preacher, can much better be sustained by a church, than a *quarrel* among themselves. The endurance is, at most, but for a year; whereas, a difficulty commenced may last for ever. Where the reasons for a change are strong and manifest, no such movement is necessary to secure it. Where they are not, the church had generally better retain their preacher, than to run the hazard of any considerable effort to remove him.

This opinion is favored by the fact, that the change proposed may not be an *improvement.* We believe efforts are sometimes made to procure the removal of a preacher, from no opposition to him, but rather from a stronger attachment to another, whose services are desired. Now, brethren should never forget, that there is much uncertainty about their having the man of their first choice, even if a change is made. There may be many other applications for him from different societies, some one of which has superior claims. And then, again, brethren should consider whether the man they seek has not defects, which will be more detrimental to his usefulness than those

which mar the present incumbent. This is often the case, and societies have had occasion to lament the day of their highest gratification. There is always danger of getting one of less acceptability. *Better* men, may have been but a single year in their stations, and are not to be moved; or the superintendent and his council may misjudge the exact wants of the people, and the qualifications of the preacher who may be appointed. These considerations are of the highest importance, and should be carefully pondered prior to any movement in the premises.

(3.) It may not be amiss to suggest that brethren carefully inquire whether the assumed faults of the preacher *are not more or less attributable to themselves*, and whether a different course of procedure, on their part, would not remedy the evil. It will be very appropriate for them to ask, have we not expected too much of our preacher? Did we receive him cordially? Have we supplied his temporal wants? counselled, encouraged, and sustained him as duty required? Have we *punctually* attended upon his ministry? upon the business, prayer, and class meetings? Have we prayed for him as we ought? or have we been tardy, and complaining, and thrown all the labor upon him? For brethren to reject a minister they have treated with coldness, and not prayed for and sus-

tained in his arduous duties, is unkind and cruel. They had better call a meeting, and confess their sins to God, and each other, and to him; and petition the superintendent to return him to them, that they may atone for the past, and retrieve the spirit of labor and devotion. This is striking at the root of the difficulty, and correcting the evil in the gospel way. It has been well said by one whose judgment is entitled to respect, that "it takes the whole church to preach the gospel effectually." A preacher is better off with no church at all, than with one that is spiritually dead. Such a church is like a wall of adamant between him and sinners' hearts, and neutralizes his best endeavors. It is a standing libel upon Christianity; and being on the side of depravity, exerts more influence against religion, than all the eloquence that ever thundered from the pulpit can exert in its favor. We have few preachers, so unsuitable for their work as not to be of some service to any church, the members of which are alive in religion. It will be well for all our members to think of this, and rely less upon the preacher, and more upon God, and their own endeavors.

We have spoken emphatically on this point, because i is one of great interest to the itinerancy—both to preachers and people. To the lat-

ter, particularly, who are necessarily the greater sufferers. If a preacher be unfairly removed from a station, he may go to another, and labor successfully for God and souls, but he leaves a storm behind, from which the *people* cannot escape. They have gained the victory, but it is their ruin. They meant it for good, but they were deceived. If, however, they have learned that it is better to endure some little inconvenience for a year, than to hazard the success of many, it may not be altogether in vain.

5. *Deficiency in the support of our ministers*, is another source of danger to the itinerancy, which is entitled to consideration. A hireling ministry, is to be detested. The more local and isolated men are, who preach for "filthy lucre," and make merchandize of the means of grace, the better for humanity and religion. They are intruders into the sacred office, and are neither to be esteemed or supported.

But the Savior has said, the "laborer is worthy of his meat"—that those who "preach the gospel shall live of the gospel." The minister who devotes himself to his calling, is entitled to a competent living for himself and family. Without this, he must be embarrassed, so as to impair his influence, and bring reproach upon the cause. What greater temptation can a man have to abandon the itine-

rancy, and especially in this country, where there are so many available sources of competence and wealth? It is an astounding fact, that since Methodism began its glorious career in this country, three times as many travelling preachers have *located*, as have died, withdrawn, and been expelled, put together, to say nothing of others who have become discouraged during their probationary labors, and turned aside to other churches and other callings. It is not presumed, that all of them were influenced to this course by temporal embarrassment, but it is well known that this has been a fruitful source of locations. Many have itinerated themselves into debt, and located to be honest and provide for their households.

How much the members of the church are to be blamed, is for the Judge of all to decide. We have not referred to the fact censoriously, by any means. However unfaithful *individuals* may have been in supporting the ministry, it is believed that our people, taken together, have been as liberal according to their means as any other church in the land. They have generally been of the poorer classes, of which we *boast*.

But now, that our circumstances are improved, and our membership greatly increased, this matter demands special attention. It is enough to ask of ministers that they forego the pleasures of

wealth, without imposing on them the pains of penury and want. We would, therefore, exhort all who love this stupendous system of usefulness, to aid in its support. It is as much the duty of every member and friend of the church to do this, as it is to pray for its success. And, poor as we are, compared with some others, we are satisfied that were all to contribute for this object, as God prospers them, there would be little ground of complaint in any part of the work, and our itinerant machinery would roll on with increasing vigor, to the consummation of its noble enterprise. Reader, what have you done the present year to support your minister? How much do you propose to do? If God requires your minister to preach, he requires you to help support him. If you neglect the latter, you may compel him to neglect the former, and turn away from the gospel to serve tables. As you love the itinerancy, and wish to see it advancing with accumulating force, do your duty. Do it now,—do it next year,—do it while you live.

6. It has become somewhat common in certain parts of the country for travelling ministers to locate their families. This is always done in the expectation of being accommodated in their appointments. And if they are not, they are apt to take offence, and secede, or locate, and become

opposers of the itinerancy. Many of the most lamentable alienations from our church, are attributable to this cause. And often where they are accommodated, it is to the great injury of religion. They are either stationed where there are prejudices against them, or where there are not adequate means of support, either of which is a source of embarrassment and trial to themselves and their people.

Men of ordinary talent cannot long retain their popularity under these circumstances, nor, indeed, the most humble place in the itinerant ranks. The experiment has been too often tried to admit of hope in the case, and it is devoutly to be wished that it may never be repeated.

Ministers of a higher order of talent have sometimes done better, yet they have essentially suffered, and itinerancy has suffered with them. To accommodate their circumstances, it has been necessary to continue them in the presiding eldership for many years, or to keep them hovering around the same city or neighborhood, vibrating between the presiding elder's office and a station, much to the annoyance of the people.

On the whole, it cannot be denied that the practice is injurious. And as travelling is now cheaper and easier, and parsonage furniture is more generally supplied than formerly, it is to be hoped that it will be abandoned

7. We cannot refrain from mentioning in this place, a popular evil among us, which, we fear, will be given up with great reluctance. We mean, the practice of preaching *farewell* sermons. It is very unpleasant for ministers and their people to separate, where there exists any ordinary degree of affection between them. At best, parting scenes are hazardous to a circulating ministry. Paul had his heart broken at Cesarea by the tears and entreaties of his brethren, who would dissuade him from leaving them. But by the grace of God, he tore himself from their embraces, saying, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts xxi. 13. Such scenes are necessarily painful, and proportionably calculated to render an itinerant ministry disagreeable.

But how much they are aggravated by *farewell* sermons, aimed at the passions, to educe the greatest manifestation of regret possible, we need not describe. That minister must have little susceptibility of emotion, and little influence over his flock, who cannot, by taking advantage of such circumstances, produce very considerable excitement both in himself and his people. And what must be the effect? Some, we know, will be disgusted, as every one really ought to be, but the

mass will go away complaining of the itinerancy, and perhaps resolving to abandon the system, and get a minister they can call their own.

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not object to referring to the approaching separation. The occasion is one which may be improved to great profit. It furnishes a fit opportunity to exhibit and defend the itinerant system, and to inspire the audience with those noble and heavenly sentiments and emotions, which are necessary to grapple the difficulties, and make the sacrifices inseparable from its faithful prosecution. The church may be made to feel a stronger and holier enthusiasm in meeting the reproaches, and bearing the burdens of the cause, than on any other day in the year. It may, too, be reminded of its duty to the coming stranger, of its own resources, and of the certainty of success under almost any administration, if God be sought unto, and depended on.

8. Itinerancy has no doubt suffered from the multiplication of stations beyond our ability to furnish them competent preachers, or to support them. Our zeal has not always been according to knowledge. Hoping to extend the work of God and Methodism, we have often constituted a mere handful of members into a separate station, without any reasonable prospect of their being

able to support a preacher properly. Many such societies have struggled through and gained considerable strength; but many others remain weak and unsettled, and are in doubt whether they shall survive or perish. The evils of too great precipitancy in this matter are various. First, it imposes a severe trial upon the preachers, whose lot it is to serve such societies. They have to labor under great disadvantages. Their income, at most, being only sufficient to meet the bare necessaries of life, they have to occupy unsuitable houses, devote considerable time to supply their own wants, and after all, live in a style which is prejudicial to their influence in community. It also imposes a heavy tax upon the people. Being few and poor, and having to support the preacher, and meet the other expenses of society, they must feel it a burden upon their spirits. How many in such circumstances have lost their energy, and left the church altogether? To this, we may add, that such societies are often compelled to worship in inconvenient places, or to erect contracted and unsuitable meeting houses, or run in debt for better ones, where there is not sufficient probability of their paying; all of which are ruinous evils, and to be avoided if possible.

It is believed that brethren had better go a considerable distance to church, even on foot, than to

attempt to support themselves as a separate station before they are able. To begin to build and not be able to finish, is mortifying. It is well for them to consider their present numbers and strength,—the amount of population around them, and the prospect of success with an ordinary preacher. And, if in view of all these things, there is not a reasonable probability that they will have a respectable congregation, and be able to give a preacher a comfortable support, they had better continue in connection with another appointment, and be satisfied with occasional lectures or preaching a part of the time. This will be best not only for them, but for the society with which they are connected, which might be discouraged and enfeebled, and even destroyed by their separation. And, besides, it will save a preacher, for a more propitious place, where he may be sustained and do good.

We are evidently becoming too fearful of a little sacrifice in going to church. A few miles walk used to be thought nothing of for the sake of meeting with the people of God, and hearing a sermon or two. Men, women and children would perform the task with the utmost cheerfulness, and the preacher would have hearers. But now, alas! every neighborhood must have a preacher to entertain a handful of people, though he die for

the want of bread, or they are thought to be in a state of moral destitution. It is time to have done with this miserable policy. It is squandering ministerial talent upon the sluggishness of the people, and is little better than beating the air. Small societies within a few miles of each other had better compromise, and have a preacher among them who shall give them each a sermon on the Sabbath, and one occasionally in the evening, and all turn out and hear him. By such an arrangement the preachers would receive an ample support without unduly taxing any one, they would have more hearers, and of course would preach better, and the societies would have more or less preaching every week, and be less oppressed with debts and duns than at present.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MINISTRY NECESSARY TO THE ITINERANCY OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

PECULIAR duties, require peculiar men. It is not every man who is suitable for a minister, nor every minister who is adapted to itinerate. We need men in this work who have a mind for it, are called to it, and are qualified to perform its duties. Men who are shut up to it—whose convictions of duty disallow of their pursuing any thing else. In particular:

1. They must be men of *genuine piety*—men who are really converted to God, and have the witness of the Spirit "that they are the children of God," and heirs of heaven. A faith which stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, and a hope which is now like an anchor to the soul, are indispensable. It is the itinerant's duty, to teach every where, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of salvation—its spirituality and power—its conditions and indications, its duties and emotions. And to do it in its own

spirit. And how can he do this, but by first *feeling* it himself—by having it wrought into his inmost soul by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and maintained there in all the freshness of its first manifestation? St. Paul was sent to be a witness of "the things he had seen," and the things in which Christ "would appear unto him." This was an important part of his duty as a minister; and how faithfully he performed it, may be seen from his frequent reference to his Christian and ministerial experience. He who will successfully preach the way of salvation by Christ, must himself be a witness of its practicability and power. He must be able to show that *he* has been saved by it; that it has saved *him* from guilt, and sin, and fear, and has made *him* a new, and happy, and holy man. Who can persuade the sick to the great Physician, like one whose maladies have all been healed? He knows the blessedness of religion, because he has *felt* it. He knows its means are unfailing, because he has tried them. He knows God is true, because he has proved him. He can, therefore, be more definite in his expositions, and more confident in his affirmations. Though he may be constarined to say in reference to many things, "I know not," he can confidently witness to the verity and power of the religion he preaches.

But who can have "a *mind* for" the arduous work of the itinerancy, without genuine piety? We have shown it to be emphatically a system of *sacrifice;* a system which relinquishes every thing for Christ—which leaves selfishness no foothold. How is it possible, then, for unregenerate and selfish men to take any part in such a ministry; or if by chance, they enter it, where is the probability of their continuing in it long, or performing its labors with efficiency? As well may we expect to "gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles," as to expect Christian activity or ministerial success from such men. Having no spiritual taste for the work, they will either be idlers in the temple of God, or daub it with untempered mortar.

Says Erasmus, "You will never win others over to a religious life, unless you yourself are first possessed of *piety*. This inspires thoughts, dispositions, and words, which nothing else can produce. It is this that animates the voice, the gesture, and every action of the Christian preacher. When he is thus grounded in piety, it is difficult to conceive with what facility, and with what success he labors, still enjoying an unspeakable sweetness in himself. Then it is, that he is truly sensible of his vocation; then he speaks in the cause of God, and then only he is in a proper situation to affect others."

2. *They must be called of God to the office and work of the ministry.* The Master has seen fit to make this office divinely elective, in other words, to choose his own ministers. Hence inquires St. Paul, "How shall they preach except they be sent?" Accordingly, the Savior called the twelve apostles—other seventy also, and enjoined the duty of praying the "Lord of the harvest that he would send forth more laborers into his harvest." When the vacancy occasioned by the fall of Judas was to be filled, so deeply impressed were the apostles with the divine prerogative to *call* men to the ministry, they would not interpose their judgment, but submitted the case to God in prayer. While "certain prophets and teachers ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed and preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews."

Jesus said to Paul, "Rise and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to *make thee a minister and a witness*, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now *I send* thee; to open their eyes,

and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." It was in view of this call that the apostle declares, "Christ *sent* me not to baptize" (as my principal business,) "but to preach the Gospel." 1 Cor. i. 17. He alludes to it again, in the preface of his epistle to the Romans, in these words,—"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, *called* to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." And again, "Our sufficiency is of God, who also *hath made us*," (myself, and my associates,) "*able ministers* of the New Testament, not of the letter," (only,) "but of the spirit." He "hath committed to us the word of reconciliation," and therefore, "we are ambassadors for Christ." 2 Cor. v. 19–20. "I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God, given unto me, by the *effectual working of his power*." Eph. iii. 7. St. Paul had no more doubt of his call to the ministry, than he had of his conversion. He speaks of both in the same breath, and declares both with the same assurance.

Besides, he regarded this call to the ministry as equally binding with his call to be a Christian. He could no more abandon this than he could his religion. They were to him, and are to all, we believe, who are legitimately "sent," nearly one and the same thing. Hence, speaking of

"bonds and afflictions" which awaited him, he says, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my *life dear unto myself*, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the *ministry* which I have *received* of the *Lord Jesus*, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Acts xx. 24. Speaking of the rights of a Christian minister, he remarks, "Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for *necessity* is laid upon me; yea, *wo is me if I preach not the gospel.*" 1 Cor. ix. 16. That is, says Dr. Clarke, "I cannot glory in being a preacher of the gospel; because I am not such either by my own skill or power; I have received both the *office* and the grace by which I execute the office *from God.* I have not only his authority to preach, but that authority *obliges* me to *preach*, and if I did not, I should endanger my salvation. As every genuine preacher receives his commission from God alone; it is God alone who can take it away. Wo to that man who runs when God has *not* sent him; and wo to him who *refuses* to run, or who *ceases* to run, when God *has* sent him."

It is a doctrine of our church that God still calls his ministers to the sacred office, and qualifies them for its duties in an important sense, and that he calls them by the Spirit *moving* their hearts to the work. Hence the question in our

Discipline : " How shall we try those who profess to be *moved by the Holy Ghost* to preach. The answer is divided into three parts. 1. " Let the following questions be asked, namely, Do they know God as a pardoning God ? Have they the love of God abiding in them ? Do they desire nothing but God ? And are they holy in all manner of conversation ? " This respects their piety only, and shows that the framers of the Discipline believed that God would call none but holy men to this work. Men who " counted all loss for Christ," who desired " nothing but God." And was not this the case with the *twelve*, the *seventy*, with Paul and with Timothy ? Did they not forsake all, and hazard all for Christ ? 2. " Have they gifts (as well as grace) for the work ? Have they (in some tolerable degree) a clear and sound understanding, a right judgment in the things of God, a just conception of salvation by faith ? And has God given them any degree of utterance ? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly ?" 3. " Have they *fruit ?* Are any truly *convinced of sin, and converted to God by their preaching ?*" —p. 49.

The church no more believes that God will call men to preach who have not *talents* for it, than that he will call unpardoned sinners, or cold and stupid professors, who have lost their first love.

And farther, that when he does call men, and they obey the divine mandate, he will give them *fruit*, such as occasions "joy in the presence of the angels of God." Who can believe that Jesus has "sent" a man to "open the eyes of the blind, and turn men from the power of Satan to God," and that he is now "with" him, while that man has done and is doing nothing of the kind? Whatever his talents, he shows conclusively by his failure that he is not one of God's commissioned men, that he *never* was called to the work, or that he has fallen and lost his authority. Fine education, fine sermons, high sounding titles, and human applause, cannot cover him; he has failed of doing the work of a Christian minister, and proved to the world that he ran before he was sent, and that Christ, the faithful minister's companion, and Almighty strength, is not with him.

When the *twelve* went out, hell trembled, and the *seventy* returned rejoicing that "even *devils* were subject to them." When Peter preached, the people were "pricked in their hearts," and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" "And the Lord added to the church *daily* such as should be saved." And was not Paul successful? Did not "unclean spirits cry out" and flee away when Philip "preached Christ" in Samaria; and was there not "great joy" in that city?

Through the labors of Barnabas "much people was added unto the Lord." And which of God's chosen ministers has seen no fruit of his labor? Not one. It is only men-made ministers, proud, sycophantic, boasters of talent, or learning, or of being in the apostolic succession, so called, or who have taken the office "for a piece of bread."

In regard to the call itself, to say no more now of the outward evidences of it, we may remark, it is as real and tangible as any other work of the Spirit. Those who deny the direct "witness of the Spirit" to our souls, "that we are the children of God," generally deny any direct and reliable call by the Spirit, to the work of the ministry. They look for the call in their general disposition, circumstances, wishes, qualifications, &c. But it is the doctrine of our church, that men are "*moved by the Holy Ghost to preach.*" That God makes a direct impression upon their minds and hearts by his Spirit, which powerfully convinces them that it is his will they should preach the gospel. It is true, we do not overlook other evidences, as has been shown, but we regard them as secondary, and collateral; so that without the direct witness of the Spirit to the fact, they would not be considered sufficient to constitute a valid call.

The *mode* of the divine operation can no more

be explained in this case than in others. We know that men are *convinced of sin*, or *awakened* by the Spirit. It is sometimes done quick as thought,—the heart is intolerably oppressed with a sense of guilt and danger in a moment. But *how* it is done we are unable to say. Thus it is too, with the witness of adoption. A heavenly impression is made upon the heart, by which we instinctively cry, "*Abba Father*," and unspeakably rejoice in God as our friend and Savior. So the call to the ministry is an impression made by the Spirit upon the mind, convincive of the divine will in the premises,—and one too, which will be as lasting as the evidence of acceptance with God, and will vary in its clearness and force, as the mind varies in its religious emotions. So that to resist it will produce conscious guilt, as to resist conviction of sin, and the duty of repentance. Thus arises the conviction expressed by the apostle, "*wo is me if I preach not the gospel.*"

This impression is generally accompanied with a desire for the conversion of sinners, and a corresponding effort, by prayer, and otherwise, for the object. Besides, we believe God seldom calls a man to preach, without giving some evidence of the fact to his ministers and people. The praying ones of the church at Antioch, probably knew of the call of Saul and Barnabas before they did.

The Lord said to Ananias concerning Saul, "he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel," while the scales were yet upon his eyes. But when the church is in a cold Laodicean state, or trammeled with strange and erroneous notions of the divine economy in relation to the subject, the call of God may be utterly concealed from its vision, and the subjects of it may be regarded as deluded and fanatical, or as self-conceited and aspiring.

Such a call to the ministry, we regard as highly important to the itinerant work. Education, however polished, is not sufficient; nor extraordinary talents, nor even personal piety. There must be a divine call, and consecration to it, so convincive, that it cannot be evaded without *guilt*. And where there is such a call, there will be adaptation,—a mind so constituted and imbued, as to be efficient. This will render the duties of the office both pleasant and profitable. And, then, men who preach of "*necessity*" are comparatively reliable; that is, they are to be depended on for active service. It has been a source of great affliction to the church, that so many of her ministers have turned aside to follow other and more lucrative callings. If they ran without being sent, or if their call was a mere election of their

own,—a choice of professions, and not of divine impulse, it is all well enough. They may resort to teaching, or lecturing, or getting subscribers, or working agencies, or political offices, manufactories, or farms, and no harm is done, other than to reproach the ministerial office by degrading it to a level with other pursuits. But if God has called a man to the ministry "by the *effectual* working of his power," and gives him health to perform its duties, it is no more optional with him to abandon it for another vocation, however honorable and excellent, than it is to break the Sabbath. "*Necessity* is laid upon" him. He is *constrained* to it, by the will of God, which cannot be resisted without guilt and danger. He may be tempted to turn aside, but with him to do it is to renounce Christ and a good conscience.

Preaching Christ, "saving souls from death," strengthening the weak, confirming the wavering, and pushing the victories of the cross in every direction, is his first, his only business. He is "engaged in a great work, and cannot come down" to the minor occupations, which invite his services, and court his avarice.

If none should enter the ministry, but from such a conviction of duty, is it probable that there would be so much instability—so much fainting under hard labor and light fare, so many clerical

gentlemen abroad lecturing on all conceivable subjects, filling all kinds of agencies and offices, teaching the arts and sciences for gain, and preaching but seldom, and then to but little purpose, and in the place of others who might do it, perhaps, to better advantage? How could they so easily break away from God, and bend their consciences to such work?

It will be well for our church to adhere to her principles on this subject with invincible tenacity. No man should be licensed, or acknowledged as a minister, till he gives satisfactory evidence of piety, and a divine call to the work, whatever his other qualifications. He should be required to report himself fully,—his religious state, the movements of the Spirit upon his heart, his efforts and success. Pollok describes the kind of ministers we especially need, where he says:—

"Elect by God himself,
Anointed by the Holy Ghost, and set
Apart to the great work of saving men.
* * * * * *
All other men, what name
Soe'er they have, whatever office held,
If lawful held,—the magistrate supreme,
Or else subordinate, were chosen by men,
Their fellows, and from men derived their power,
And were accountable for all they did

To men; but he, alone, his office held
Immediately from God, from God received
Authority, and was to none but God
Amenable. * * *
His call,
His consecration, his anointing, all
Were *inward*, in the *conscience heard*
And felt. * * * *
Thus, by Jehovah chosen, andordained
To take into his charge the souls of men,
And for his trust to answer at the day
Of judgment,—great plenapotent of heaven
And representative of God on earth,—
Fearless of men and devils; unabashed
By sin enthroned, or mockery of a prince,
Unawed by armed legions, unseduced
By offered bribes, burning with love to souls,
Unquenchable, and mindful still of his
Great charge and vast responsibility;
High in the temple of the living God
He stood, amidst the people, and declared
Aloud the truth, the whole revealed truth,
Ready to seal it with his blood. * *
The uncircumcised infidel believed;
Light-thoughted mirth grew serious and wept;
The laugh profane, sunk in a sigh of deep
Repentance, the blasphemer kneeling, prayed,
And prostrate in the dust, for mercy called;
And cursed, old, forsaken sinners, gnashed
Their teeth, as if their hour had arrived.
Such was his calling, his commission such.

Yet he was humble, kind, forgiving, meek,
Easy to be entreated, gracious, mild;
And, with all patience and affection, taught,
Rebuked, persuaded, solaced, counselled, warned,
In fervent style and manner. * *
Deep learned in the philosophy of heaven,
He searched the causes out of good and ill,
Profoundly calculating their effects,
* * * and balancing,
In the arithmetic of future things,
The loss and profit of a soul to all
Eternity."

3. To be efficient in the itinerancy, ministers must be *well instructed in the science of salvation.*

"To treat with men of everlasting things,
Of life, death, bliss, and wo; to offer terms
Of pardon, grace, and peace, to the rebelled;
To teach the ignorant soul, to cheer the sad;
To bind, to loose, with all authority;
To give the feeble strength, the hopeless hope;
To help the halting and to lead the blind;
To warn the careless, heal the sick of heart,
Arouse the indolent, and on the proud
And obstinate offender to denounce
The wrath of God."

Where they may best acquire this knowledge is a question among divines. Our church has been

accustomed to direct her candidates first of all to the word of God,—the embodiment of divine truth, and to its great Author, the fountain of all wisdom; and then to the writings and experience of the good and wise of every age. And we have yet to learn that these are not the better sources of information. At all events, those who have had most to do with them, in their studies, and preparations for the ministry, have most distinguished themselves in their profession. They have displayed a skilfulness in "winning souls," and keeping them in the faith, which others might envy. There is a freshness, simplicity, animation, appropriateness, and *power* about their communications, which make them attractive and successful, while those who study and preach "vain philosophy," as no doubt many do, are but "blind leaders of the blind," not having yet learned even the rudiments of salvation.

Itinerants must be men of study, close, prayerful, spiritual study. We want to know all about our business, and especially how to "convert" the sinner from the "error of his ways, and save a soul from death." This is the great *object* of knowledge, in reference to which, all our studies should be directed.

4. Men who *will preach Christ at whatever sacrifice*, are the men for itinerancy. Though it is

due to the minister that he be comfortably supported, and this is necessary to his greatest usefulness, yet it should not be the condition of his preaching. Paul prosecuted his ministerial duties with great vigor, though compelled to labor with his hands for support. His language is:—"We suffer all things lest we should hinder the gospel. Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant to all, that I might gain the more. And this I do for the gospel's sake, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the Church. Even unto this present hour, we both *hunger* and *thirst*, and are *naked*, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and labor, working with our own hands. In perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. In all things approving ourselves as ministers of God."

Though the sufferings of our itinerancy bear no comparison to those which this apostle experienced, many have not moral courage to endure them. They want more salary, less moving, less reproach, less labor, and more of the honor of this world. If they cannot accommodate themselves otherwise,

the world is summoned to give ear to their reasons for changing their church relations. But God understands it. He sees that they seldom go from honor to dishonor, from wealth to poverty, from the many to the few; that their march is uniformly in another direction. And so do wicked men see it, and its tendency is to destroy all confidence in the ministry, and reduce it to a level with other callings. For the honor of Christianity it is to be hoped such speculators will meet with deserved neglect every where, till they find their appropriate place in some secular business, adapted to their taste. The fewer of this class of men we have in our ranks the better it will be for all concerned. They will never make such preachers as the nature of the work requires.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOCAL PREACHERS AS THEY STAND RELATED TO THE ITINERANCY.

A LOCAL preacher in our church, is one who is not a regular itinerant, and depends on his own resources for support. Personal piety, and a divine call to the ministry, are as necessary to his efficiency as to that of itinerants; and the rule of Discipline referred to in the last chapter, respects him no less than others.

The first act of the church in regard to this class of preachers, was passed in 1779, and is as follows:—"Every exhorter and *local preacher* to go by the directions of the assistants (preachers in charge) where and only where they shall appoint." This shows that they were designed to be coadjutors to the travelling preachers, and be subject to their directions. They are amenable to the quarterly conference of the circuit or station where they belong. They are expected to preach on the Sabbath whenever there is an opportunity, and to do it *gratuitously*, travelling

expenses excepted, unless it be where they regularly "fill the place of a travelling preacher by the approbation of the presiding elder;" or where they are distressed in their temporal circumstances on account of ministerial services rendered. In one case, they are to be paid for their time, in proportion to the allowance of the travelling preacher, and in the other, they are to receive what the quarterly conference are able, and disposed to give.

The justice and propriety of this arrangement will appear on a moment's reflection. In the first place, they have their time during the week, which they may devote to lawful employment, like any private member, having no pastoral charge to require their attention. And, as to their preparation for the pulpit, only preaching occasionally in the same place, they are not supposed to need much more application to study than a Sabbath school teacher, or a class-leader, who has to address the same hearers weekly, if, indeed, they do so much. And these officiaries consider that the personal advantage they derive from their preparatory labors well repays the outlay. There is no more propriety, therefore, in local preachers charging the church for their occasional services, than there is for our teachers and leaders. Nor half so much as there is for *stewards*, because they devote much time to their pecuniary duties, which

afford no personal profit, other than a consciousness of having done their duty. The church does not license these men to tax her for services, and make gain of the gospel. She does it that they may be more useful, and she expects them to devote their talents to this object, as the Providence of God may direct, without remuneration. When she recommends them to the annual conference, to become travelling preachers, she will thereby declare, that they ought to cease from worldly business, and devote themselves to the ministry, and be supported. Is not this Methodism? Is it not reasonable?

When, however, a local preacher is necessarily at expense in getting to his appointment, it is to be met by the church he serves. And when he supplies the place of a travelling preacher, and is thus taken away from his business, he is to be remunerated according to the time he spends. As the church does not intend to enrich him by his license, so she will not impoverish him. Hence, the farther provision, that if he spends time in aiding the travelling preacher in the circuit, the quarterly conference may consider the matter, and make him an allowance.

To pay a local preacher for his occasional services, would be a dangerous precedent. The church will next be called upon to pay stewards

and leaders, and Sabbath school teachers; and then, perhaps, to hire members to attend church and class. If a few local preachers have violated our excellent rule in this matter, it is to be regretted. Brethren had better shut up their houses, or read a sermon, or hold a prayer meeting, than to give the least countenance to the practice.

From what has been said, it is easy to perceive the relation which local preachers sustain to the itinerancy. Where the circuit system prevails, they may find ministerial work nearly every Sabbath, and so, indeed, where it does not, if we take pains to open up new fields. There are many neighborhoods, from which few attend any church, that may be brought under successful cultivation. Some two or three of them may be connected with one of our stations in a regular circuit, and a plan of appointments be made out, bringing all the local preachers into the work. We may also unite two or more stations into a circuit, and give them a travelling preacher, and one or two local preachers to supply the balance of the time. This would give all the preachers work—keep up the small societies, and organize new ones, lessen the burdens of our leading men, keep the Sabbath schools in operation, and, withal, give one travelling preacher a fair pastoral business, and a comfortable support.

Is it objected, that our people will not hear the local preachers? Then they have done wrong in giving them a license, and ought to retract it immediately. Men who cannot preach occasionally to the edification and profit of the people, should not be licensed. It is a paradox to authorize a man to preach, and thereby declare we believe he is called to the work, and then refuse to hear him. We ought to blush at such trifling.

Is it objected, that the local preachers will not serve without pay? The mass of them certainly will, and be glad of the chance. They naturally feel, while doing nothing, that they are of no consequence, and many have felt this long enough. They will rejoice to be brought out, where they can co-operate with their brethren in this holy work, according to our excellent economy. English local preachers are kept on the plan continually, and many of them walk several miles every Sabbath morning, for the privilege of preaching the gospel *gratuitously*, and feel themselves highly honored at that. Have ours lost the heavenly unction, that they must be paid for the privilege? We cannot believe it.

An arrangement of this kind would not only strengthen and extend the itinerancy, but it would be a great blessing to the local preachers. Ministers really called of God must work, or suffer

the "wo." If many of our local men are dull and worldly, it is not to be wondered at. Paul himself would have been no better, had he taken this course. And unless we alter our hand, we had better abandon the office, and let these men go back into the private ranks. To encourage the thought that they ought to preach, by giving them a license, and make no provision for their doing so, is bad economy, to say the least. Give them a chance, and then if they do not improve it, and render themselves useful, discharge them. Ought not itinerants to look after this business with great care, and bring all the local talent within their charge, into the most appropriate exercise?

But the travelling preachers, and the church, are not alone responsible in this matter. Local brethren should find work for themselves, always avoiding any interference with our settled arrangements. Where they are properly engaged they will do so. One has this moment called upon us, who will always have work some where, and succeed in it too, though a man of small advantages. Three others of our acquaintance have recently moved into a part of the country where there are few Methodists, but they had not been there many days, before they formed a regular circuit on the English plan. They will do good. They preach,

because they feel it their duty, and love the work. This is the right style of a local preacher—a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost, who will work, and that in a way to consolidate, and strengthen, and extend the cause, at whatever sacrifice. O! how important such men are to the interests of our church. A few of them scattered through the church would do more to restore our circuit system, than all the fair speeches and fine essays in the universe. May they be multiplied an hundred fold.

If there be any who throw themselves in the way, to subvert the itinerancy, the sooner they leave us the better. And the same is true of any who may hold the office for unworthy purposes, such as getting access to our people in their travelling speculations, to sell nostrums, or get subscribers for periodicals, or to get their bread without charge. The church needs no ministers, but those who will work unless disabled by sickness. Others must of necessity be an incumbrance, and it is no less the policy than the duty of the church to rid herself of such, whenever they appear.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUTIES OF STEWARDS IN RELATION TO THE ITINERANCY.

THE steward's office was at first strictly financial. It is principally so at present, but not exclusively. Stewards form a sort of *council* to the preachers, to advise in important matters, both in respect to personal and official conduct. Thus, the office is one of great responsibility and importance.

A board of stewards composed of men such as the Discipline specifies, viz., "men of *solid piety*, who both *know* and *love* the Methodist doctrine and discipline, and of good natural and acquired abilities," must be of peculiar service to any preacher, however wise, and particularly, on his first appearance among them. They may give him information, which will add much to his usefulness, and otherwise contribute to his efficiency and success. While, on the other hand, if they look at him askant, meet him with evident dislike, and either complain of him to others, or en-

tertain and encourage their complaints, they may embarrass, and do him more harm than all the other members of the church. In regard to his usefulness, "they are a savior of life unto life, or of death unto death." Hence, the importance of their being "men of *solid piety*," that they may not be governed by a narrow, selfish spirit; and that they "know and *love* the Methodist discipline," that they may advise intelligently, and with a view to the good of the cause.

It has been objected to our itinerancy, that it creates instability in the operations of society. So far as general operations are concerned, this cannot be true, as these are definitely settled for the whole Connection, by disciplinary rules, and are therefore the same with all preachers, and in all places. As it respects *particulars*, not provided for, the objection might have some force, but for the abiding presence and influence of stewards. They know what the order of the church has been, and under what economy it has succeeded best, and are expected, by virtue of their office, to interpose good advice, whenever an unfavorable divergency is attempted. In this way, they operate as a sort of regulator, both to the church and the minister, and where they are faithful to their high trust, and keep within their proper province, being neither too officious, or

neglectful, they are not only a regulator to the church, but an engine, by which both minister and people are sweetly propelled forward to glorious achievements. Young ministers, especially, need just such a body of men to sustain them in their new and difficult work. When perplexed with doubts, and fears, and uncertainty, in relation to what is the proper course to pursue, to have the kind, and official advice of a pious and intelligent board, is a great relief, and may save the church from many evils, which might otherwise result from their inexperience. It is to be feared, that stewards in general do not properly appreciate the importance of their office, and are not, therefore, as beneficial, either to the church or the preacher, as they might be.

Viewed in its financial bearings, merely, the office holds an intimate relation to the itinerancy. Men who devote themselves entirely to the ministry must be supported by the church. But for them to say or do much about this, will create prejudice against them, and impair their influence. This business, therefore, has been entrusted to the stewards, whose duty it is to look after the wants of the preacher, and take all proper means to supply them; and it is expected that they will do it. If they neglect this, the preacher will be embarrassed. This will lead him to suspect that

his services are not appreciated, and, perhaps, necessitate him to run in *debt*, or *suffer*, all of which will operate to discourage him in the work, and unfit him for effective duty. For, what can a man do for a church, weighed down with such embarrassments? He must be more than mortal not to be essentially unnerved, if not driven to location. To expect a minister to serve them with *spirit* and *energy*, while little or no attention is paid to his temporal wants, is unreasonable. He cannot do it. And to expect men to continue long in the itinerancy, under such neglect, is equally so. Stewards, therefore, have the destiny of our church, in a great measure, in their own hands. They may discourage and prostrate the preacher, so that he cannot work, and thus bring down ruin upon their own heads, and upon the society to which they belong; or they may, by fidelity to their duty, keep him in good spirits, and render him a blessing to the people he now serves, and to others to whom the itinerancy will introduce him hereafter. A few hints upon this aspect of the steward's office will finish all I have to say upon the subject.

1. Stewards should commence operations to secure the support of their preacher in *season*. Where it is to be raised by subscription, it is well to take the subscriptions at the close of each year,

before the preacher, for whose support they are taken, makes his appearance;—always observing to specify in writing, that it is for the preacher who may be sent, without reference to any one in particular. This will give the subscribers ample time to prepare to make their payments; and what is not unimportant, it will compel them to subscribe from *principle*, and not from personal predilection for the preacher himself. Then, if they particularly esteem the man who is sent, and wish to give more, they can do so; but if they do not esteem him as highly as they would another, nevertheless, he has something to live upon, and may be useful. It is an object to induce all our people to subscribe for the *cause*, and not for the *man*. Till they do so, churches will be subject to much vacillation in their circumstances. It is also an object to have them subscribe in *season*, as they will generally do more on the principle, that men will give more for an article on long credit, than in cash down. But if any thing should occur to prevent doing this business at the close of the year, let it be done immediately after the commencement of the following year.

Stewards ought, also, to be *seasonable* in making their *collections*. Itinerants seldom have more than enough money to pay their moving expenses, if indeed, they have so much, and will need cash,

or credit, very soon. There is not a year passes, in which many do not have to borrow money to get to their new stations. To ask for money the first thing, is unpleasant, and, being a stranger, to ask credit, is not less so. Unless, therefore, the stewards are thoughtful and prompt enough to step forward and volunteer their assistance, the poor man may suffer irremediably in his feelings, and perhaps otherwise, and thus be discouraged for the year, if not for life. Let the stewards meet him with *fifty* or an *hundred* dollars in advance, or at least with *five* dollars, and the result will be different. And, especially, if at the same time they give him a small donation visit, as is sometimes done, supplying his worn-out family with needful food for a few days, or weeks, till they can get a little settled. This will require but a small sacrifice on the part of any one individual, and will be immensely useful to the preacher and his family in their circumstances. And, besides, such will be the effect of this kind greeting upon his sensibilities, that whatever qualifications he may possess, they will be exerted, in the best manner, in grateful return for the kindness received. So says philosophy, and so says fact; and there is not a board of stewards in the country which might not do this work in very good and acceptable style, if they would take the pains to set it on foot.

We now call to mind one poor society, which thus met their preacher, who was an entire stranger. Having reached the house where he was expected to live, and surveyed the premises with a heart sufficiently heavy, the society, stewards, leaders and others came pouring in upon him, shaking his hand, as if it had been that of an old friend, presenting provisions for several weeks, besides other valuables. We need not say that this kind reception, none the less welcome for being unexpected, disarmed the stranger of all his fears, and contributed to the happiness and success of his two years' pilgrimage in the place. Poor societies which expect to fall short of a full support for their preacher, ought to atone, as far as possible, for this deficiency, by their promptness, and the multiplication of their little attentions, which make the heart glad, if they do not enrich the purse. And the earlier they are shown, the more influential they will be.

2. Stewards should do their work *faithfully*. It is not enough to begin in *season*, it must be done *thoroughly*. Where it is necessary, every man in community, who is able, should be asked to contribute, and be shown that it is his duty, whether he attends the meeting or not. There is frequently too much timidity in this business. Men are passed by, or slightly reminded of what

they may do, and there the matter rests, and nothing is done Now, this is not right,—they ought to be deliberately talked with, on the subject, and made, if possible, to feel their responsibility. It must be done kindly, indeed, for it can be done in no other way, but *emphatically*, and with perseverance. And if the stewards will prepare themselves with a little subscription book and carry it with them, they will find the men, and they will find the time, without going much out of their way.

They should not only be faithful in getting the necessary amount subscribed, but in *collecting* it. Whether it is to be paid *weekly*, or *monthly*, or *quarterly*, or *yearly*—whether it comes in the shape of class collections, subscriptions, or pew rents, or taxes, they should see that it be paid at the time, and train all the people in this way of doing business. The preacher's expenses are accumulating daily. He must be supplied from month to month, or quarterly, or run in debt, and be embarrassed. And then, if you don't collect your dues *at the time*, some of them will be lost. The subscriber will be sick, or move away, or take offence, or otherwise evade your claim, and the preacher may have to suffer the loss. Get the money the first hour after it is due, if possible. This is the only way to make it sure. Many

among us can pay a little monthly, or quarterly, or oftener, and be none the worse off, but if you don't call till the close of the year you may get nothing.

3. Stewards ought to act from *principle*, and not from *feeling* toward the preacher, either good or bad. It is the *cause* that is to be looked at, and not the *preacher*, merely. Steward's have sometimes been known to beg every farthing they could, and even *borrow*, and otherwise run in debt, to make up a large amount for their preacher because they had a particular fondness for him; and the next year to be correspondingly negligent, because not so highly *pleased*. The first collections, of course, in such a case, must be appropriated to the payment of *last year's debts*, and the stewards relaxing effort, the other members catch the same spirit, and the preacher suffers cold treatment, and hard fare, and is finally sent off in debt, either to locate in despair, or run the awful risk of another similar trial. We have no evidence that such things are common among stewards. We believe they are not, but they have occurred, and may again, unless guarded against. Stewards should be just as faithful, in trying to support a man with whom they are not particularly pleased, as they are to support a favorite. They are not appointed to their office to sit in judgment

on the preachers, and *feed* or *starve*, as they may chance to *like* or *dislike* them. By no means. Such conduct is unjust, and ungenerous in the extreme, and is equally dishonorable and dangerous to the cause. Methodism could not long live under such an administration, and not only stewards, but all others, interested in the prosperity of the church, should set their face as a flint against every appearance of so great an evil.

4. Stewards should adopt a *liberal, high-minded policy*, in reference to the support of their preacher. There are two extremes to be avoided. One is a niggardly, penny-saving, ultra economy, which makes out a low estimate, and meets it, if at all, in odds and ends. The other is an economy which devises things too liberal for the circumstances, and thus harases society continually with duns and debts. The happy medium lies midway between these, and should be carefully sought by those who have the matter in charge, and cordially concurred in by all the members. The absolute necessities of life are very few, and may be had for a small sum. A preacher may live in an inferior house, in an out-of-the-way place, at a small rent,—he can get along with little furniture, and that which is old and nearly worthless, and live in other respects accordingly, and in this way save his society considerable expense. But who

does not know that this would be miserable policy for the people. If ministers had the power of working miracles, in demonstration of their mission, they might command attention, however circumstanced; but not pretending to this high qualification, it is necessary for them to assume an external attitude, which, while it is innocent in itself, is calculated to give them the greatest amount of influence over the people they would teach and save. Now, it is a settled fact, that community judge of men by their *appearance*. When they see a minister miserably clad,—living as a poor outcast from society, they naturally infer that he is *nothing*, and nobody, and that his people are a low and unworthy class of beings, whose society is to be avoided; and there they leave them, without taking the pains to examine the matter any further. Here is a fact, the result of which is, that such a minister is necessitated to work on a small scale, and to little purpose. His benevolent designs are thwarted at the outset, by his appearance, which repels the community, and cuts off all useful communication with them. Were he to take the attitude of a vain, hair-brained dandy, the result would be nearly the same, though in this case he would rather be despised than pitied. Stewards, therefore, should furnish their preachers with respectable and convenient tene-

ments, and furniture, and with other means of making a respectable appearance before the community, and thus show that they respect themselves, and the minister God has sent them, or submit to be treated with cold neglect. What is saved here in dollars and cents, by *parsimony*, is doubly lost in influence and success. This is a lesson which some have learned too late, but which is coming to be better understood than formerly.

Let all our stewards faithfully weigh the matter, and submit it to the test, and they will find a liberal economy to be the *true* policy—that they not only accomplish more for God, and the souls of men, but that they meet their expenses with less labor and difficulty. And, not alone for the reasons just stated, for the preachers, seeing that their people respect and appreciate them, and being in circumstances of comfort and convenience, will feel more respect for themselves and their people, and improve their better condition in study, and labor with greater efficiency and success.

BK
8345

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 021 899 313 8